(Un)canny Spaces:
The Unbecoming of Everyday Architecture

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by examiners.

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Abstract

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, socioeconomic changes due to rapid urbanization defined a clear demarcation between public and private realms. In opposition to the chaotic milieu of the cities, the notion of home as a site of refuge was even more reinforced, propagating a cult of domesticity in the bourgeois society. Displaying excessive interior decorations and countless collections of personal objects, home has become an inwardly-constructed embodiment of one's desires, memories and emotions. Not only a hideout from the external world but also an exposé of one's repressed unconscious, home becomes simultaneously a place of the homely and the unhomely.

   The thesis investigates the phenomenology of the ambivalent nature of everyday architecture. Within banal landscape of familiar world, the unhomely emerges and subverts the preconceived notion of architectural space. What was once inextricably linked to one's senses is now being questioned for its validity and reliability. The unhomely is not a physical setting located in a particular site, nor a mere stimulus eliciting certain emotions; rather, it is the process of re-contextualization of one's intimate relationship with the world. This architectural phenomenon reveals the notion of death living in our existential temporality through the process in which the unconscious is projected onto the physical materiality of architecture. It is the fearful nature of everyday space which unbecomes itself, separating our bodily ego from the world of familiarity.

   The following work attempts to analyze the nature the *un-* of the *[un]homely*. This mechanism indicates that our everyday space is imbued with a precarious, yet, powerful energy of becoming that constantly transforms the familiar into the unfamiliar. In the space of the unhomely, we are haunted by our own emotions and imaginations which create a new kind of architectural experience beyond the domain of the corporeal.

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To my family.

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PREFACE

In the spring of 2011, I revisited my old hometown after a 17-year absence. Located at the outskirts of Busan, Songjung is a small fishing village where I spent most of my early childhood. Prior to the visit, I imagined myself walking on the streets of Songjung and having all the memories brought back, as if it were possible to satisfy my longing for the lost time. Every corner of the town was supposed to be tinged with childhood memories: playing water-balloon dodgeball over the ten feet wide canal that leads to the seaside, collecting various insects into my pocket from the bushes along the railway track, and running around the field of blooming Cosmos to catch dragonflies of the autumn.

When I revisited the town, however, everything had changed. The canal was now filled up with concrete blocks, and the pathway to the railway track was cut off with the adjacent trees and bushes removed. The flower field was replaced with a few abandoned houses. Above all things, the town seemed quite empty and deserted with no one on the street. The neighbors said that the redevelopment project for transforming the town into a tourist attraction had failed a couple years ago and that many had left the town since.

The place I once called my own home was strangely displaced. Something was dismally lost in the whole picture of the setting. I realized that I no longer belonged there and nor did my memories. That uneasy feeling arising from the discrepancy between the atmosphere of the town and the way I remembered it was something greater than a mere sense of nostalgia. After half an hour of walking around the town, I was suddenly vexed with an inkling of fear creeping up on my shoulder. It was subtle at first, however, its intensity grew more and more until I felt an urge to leave the town.

How did finding discrepancies between memories of the past and the current experience activate this strange perception of a place I was once intimately attached to? What part of the experience provoked inexplicable anxiety? Why did I feel like I was a stranger to my own hometown?

INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud first introduced the term *uncanny* in his psychoanalytical essay *Das Unheimliche [The Uncanny]* in 1919. The term is a translated version of the German word *unheimlich* which is an amalgamation of *un-* and *heimlich*. *Das heimliche* [the homely] can be defined as a state of "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely, etc."[1] or as "what is concealed and kept hidden."[2] Because its etymological root is based on the word *heim*, meaning home, the term suggests a certain spatial orientation in the context of domestic setting. *Heimlich* therefore implies the idea of being inside home – a place safeguarded from the external world.

However, as the prefix *un-* is added to the word, the subject becomes situated outside the frame of *heim.* It is a frightening, if not terrifying, experience in which my own body is replaced with someone else's. A sense of belonging is taken away by the horror of being estranged from my own home, of becoming an exile. Freud states that, in the word unheimlich, the prefix *un-* refers to "arousing uneasy, fearful horror."[3]

> Starting from the homely and the domestic, there is a further development towards the
> notion of something removed from the eyes of strangers, hidden, secret...[4]

Therefore, the relationship between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* is not simply antithetical; rather, *unheimlich* is already integrated in the core of *heimlich*. It is the agent of *un-* that overturns the whole structure of *heim*, revealing the unhomely character of the space. The word *unhomely* is, therefore, to be treated as *(un)homely* with the prefix *un-* muted in the word, meaning that what provokes the uneasy feeling is furtively hidden in the very realm of *heim*. These layers of the word indicates that there are doubled sides to the nature of our everyday home.

Although it seems impossible to determine the physical nature of the unhomely, we experience it regardless of its locus, insofar as the notion of *heim* is embodied in the space. Then what exactly is the extent of *heim* in our everyday architecture and what defines the outside of *heim* versus the inside? How is it triggered and in what kind of form does it emerge into the space? What are the qualities of the uncanny and how do we recognize them? Is it possible to construct the uncanny? In these senses, the subject should be investigated

through the lens of architectural phenomenology: where, when, and how it subliminally recontextualizes our perception of architectural space.

In *The Architectural Uncanny*, Anthony Vidler elucidates the dilemma of locating the specific site of the *unheimlich*, despite the fact that it has numerously made an appearance throughout history as the unknown that provokes the fear of losing domestic security.[5] For instance, the Romantic novels and modern cinemas narrate this idea of emotional estrangement in stories of a haunted place. These representations are, however, no more than a fictional theme, and the actual mechanism of the uncanny is rarely depicted. Although Vidler examines the history, the psychological analysis, and the cultural manifestations of the uncanny in his essay, the phenomenology of our perception of the architectural uncanny is still in question. Based on the following quote by Vidler, the following thesis opens a discussion on how our experience of architectural space is framed by our own values, meanings, and understanding:

> The uncanny is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular
> spatial conformation. It is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state
> of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to
> provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming. [6]

There are two domains that contribute to the provocation of the uncanny: the material quality of the space and our faculty of cognition. These two are, however, not to be considered as separate realms but as interdependent components which constitute the whole body of the uncanny. Borrowing Deleuze's idea of 'concept' — "real without being actual [and] ideal without being abstract"[7] — the research will study the uncanny as a phenomenon which is "self-referential"[8] in its essence and energy within architectural space. In order to describe the immensurable aspects of the uncanny involving the 'feeling' and the 'sensing', the thesis will rather take an unconventional approach to architectural interpretation.

The other factor we must consider in terms of the uncanny space is the role of time. From a phenomenological perspective, architecture performs as a remembering body that constantly changes its form. It is not only "an objective reality" but also a "socially constructed realm of materiality and intersubjectivity"[9]. Once memories are constructed based on one's architectural experience, the space becomes an embodiment of mnemonic symbols. Although virtually forgotten in everyday world, these signifiers, at certain moments, haphazardly draw out the hidden unconscious, violently disrupting one's sense of spatio-temporality. This unexpected superimposition of the present and the past creates a disparate quality, which triggers the operation of the uncanny.

The thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical account of the architectural uncanny which attempts to uncover the fundamental principles: the origin, time, location, aesthetic dimensions of the uncanny, and the role of our unconscious in creating the phenomenon. Part I, *The Origin of the Uncanny*, discusses which part of human disposition is responsible for the feeling of the uncanny, locating its root in our existential nature. Part II, *The Unconscious*, explores the powerful mechanism of the uncanny – the unconscious; this section exclusively deals with the way our memories, imagination, and emotions are being projected onto the material form of architecture, blurring the boundary between the real and the unreal. Part III, *Aesthetic Dimensions of the Uncanny*, inspects the paradoxical structure of the uncanny in terms of its aesthetic qualities; referring to the Kantian sublime, the fantastic, and surrealism, we will delve into our natural fascination towards both the attractive and the repulsive nature of the uncanny space. Part IV, *Time of the Uncanny*, investigates the temporality of the uncanny: the process of build-up, the moment of its emergence, the duration of its time, and the recoverability of the disrupted sense of time. Time, in this sense, plays a substantial part in facilitating the transition of the essence of architectural space from the homely to the unhomely. Part V, *Place of the Uncanny*, speculates the physical form of the uncanny in everyday architecture with regard to its scale, motion, and intensity. The discussion on the phenomenological relationship of our body to the uncanny space proposes the potential of further creativity in our perception of architecture.

The second chapter of the thesis documents the installation project which experiments with the theoretical principles of the uncanny as speculated in the first chapter. The project demonstrates how the uncanny can be constructed in a form of architectural space, beyond the concept of an ephemeral effect. This component of the thesis seeks to emphasize the importance of the phenomenological reading of architecture and challenges to expand the paradigm of creativity in architectural making.

NOTES

1   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, ed. David
     McLintock and Hugh Haughton (London: Pen-
     guin, 2003), 126.

2   Ibid., 132.

3   Ibid., 133.

4   Ibid.

5   Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny:
     Essays In The Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge:
     MIT Press, 1992), 11.

6   Ibid.

7   Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans.
     Paul Patton (New York: Columbia UP, 1994),
     208.

8   Ibid.

9   Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenom-
     enology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio UP,
     2012), 48.

I

Origin
of the
Uncanny

"Why, 'thanael, darling, don't you know?" she replied. "Oh! He's a wicked man, who comes to little children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes, so that they jump out of their heads all bloody; and he puts them into a bag and takes them to the half-moon as food for his little ones; and they sit there in the nest and have beaks like owls, and they pick naughty little boys' and girls' eyes out with them."[1]

1.1   The Sandman

In E.T.A. Hoffman's novel, the tale of *The Sandman* is used as a story within a story to frame the foundation for the anxiety that results from the protagonist's childhood. The monster's brutal act of stealing eyes from children is shockingly violent for a bedtime story, traumatizing little Nathanael. Even in adulthood, the fear of losing his eyes to the Sandman continues to disturb him, despite the fact that the figure is nothing more than a figment of his imagination. Nathanael compulsively projects the plot of *The Sandman* into the morbid incidents he encounters, believing them to be related to his father's mysterious death. Climactically, Nathanael sights his love Olimpia's eyes falling out of their sockets and onto the floor, unaware of the fact that she was in fact only an automaton. He immediately associates the macabre scene to the Sandman's barbarity and, given time, becomes psychotic. Under the influence of the childhood trauma, Nathanael sees as though through the kaleidoscope of lifelong anxiety, which distorts his perception of the world and seriously impairs his judgment regarding the real and the unreal.

1.2   Separation from 'heim'

Nathanael's fear of losing his eyes to the Sandman, in Freudian perspective, is a substitutive form of the "infantile castration complex".[2] According to Freud, the fear of losing body parts is ultimately related to the fear of losing one's home or being isolated from the most familiar realm, that of oneself. In this sense, the body is recognized as the most fundamental form of self-consciousness, and it becomes the very first physical home from the time of infancy.

In her psychoanalysis *Object Relations Theory*, Melanie Klein describes how the relationship of infants to their mothers affects the children's understanding of the social ego, that is, their understanding of self in relation to the world. She illustrates that the infant's experience of physical intimacy with and emotional attachment to the mother induces a psychological amalgamation of the self and the mother (or her breast) into a homogeneous

whole. Hence, separating from the caring figure — whom represents one's physical and emotional shelter — threatens child's sense of belonging to the world of the homely. As can be seen, the existential conceptualization of home is not just limited to one's own physical body but also extends to familiarized bodies of the others.

Freud, in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, insists that infantile anxiety caused by separation from the loving mother is "converted into the fear of darkness"[3] and is later re-projected into situations that mysteriously resemble the form of isolation from one's home. Freud refers to the experience of darkness, silence, and solitude as the example where infantile anxiety infiltrates, "something that most of us never wholly overcome".[4] Being in the dark provokes the feeling of estrangement from one's realm of *heim*, since the darkness triggers the unveiling of unconscious fear, even to the extent of morbid anxiety.[5] The recurring trauma of being disintegrated from one's home, therefore, results in the splitting of the ego. In Freudian perspective, the principal component that constructs the perception of the unhomely is anxiety for preserving one's *heim*, that which is an essential part of existential experience.

1.3 Existential anguish

As illustrated in Klein's study, anxiety is an indispensable attribute of our "ego's instincts of self-preservation".[6] It is a defense mechanism which warns of potential threats to security, and hence, is critical for human instinct to survive. Beyond its primitive role, however, anxiety is also significant medium through which we gain insight into our existential being. Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time (Sein and Zeit)*, elucidates the inextricable link between existential anxiety and ontological inquiry about the human nature. He argues that anxiety (or what he calls "Angst") is a "fundamental mode"[7] in which we understand our own *being-in-the-world* and that it reveals our "ownmost possibilities of being".[8]

> What Angst is anxious for is being-in-the-world itself. In Angst, the things at hand in the
> surrounding world sink away, and so do innerworldly beings in general.[9]

The understanding of one's own existential being is made possible through the entity of *Da-sein* (a German word *da-* there, and *sein-* being), which, in Heideggerian terminology, is "a being which related understandingly in its being toward that being".[10] Dasein is the only being who is concerned with its own existence and temporality.[11] It apprehends that death is something "not chosen" by its own will, "but is thrown or forced"[12] upon it. Subsequently, at the very moment of apprehending its own death, Dasein becomes overwhelmed with

existential anxiety. In this context, experience becomes a quality of existence: death is not something external, but an integral part of Dasein. Therefore anxiety is a "trepidation before our many and varied possibilities"[13] that "arise out of our being-in-the-world".[14] This "dread about Being-in-the-world itself",[15] can further be characterized by a feeling of powerlessness and vulnerability to one's own imminent demise as one realizes that we are all *being-towards-death.*

Dasein intuitively senses the existence of death in itself at the state of Dying (*Sterben*).[16] The intuition comprises an experience ahead of the time of its actual death,[17] a moment in which truth of the imminence of its death is disclosed. Death only exists in the future tense. However, Dasein's time does not operate linearly; instead, its past and present are collectively reconstituted into its future. Its time is always directed towards the future and never settled in the present. Such futurity is the "lacuna within Dasein that makes it incomplete".[18] As a result, only through acknowledging its own death does Dasein become a complete being. Futurity is the most eminent quality of Dasein's temporality, one which reveals the totality of possibility in its being.

> This can jar us out of our habitual comfort zones; we find that things are uncanny (unheimlich), and this can provoke the awareness that we are free to either authentically or inauthentically confront the possibilities before us.[19]

The existential anguish provoked by the experience of "dying" (*sterben*), however, is never resolved. As Heidegger describes, death quietly awaits within our being to be fulfilled one day.[20] It can never be seized until its time; instead, it is an imminent matter whose possibility "cannot be outstripped"[21] upon Dasein's own will. Existential angst endlessly returns as death is always imminent and dismantling of all other possibilities of being. It is an existential individuation from *being-in-the-world*, indicating that the self is "annihilated in the process"[22] of understanding its own possibility of being. Death in this sense is a social annihilation of the ego from its realm of heim. Dasein no longer belongs to its home but has become a stranger to itself. The source of the anxiety is the fear of death, which we apprehend in anxiety.[23] Existential anxiety is, hence, ego's segregation from the world of heim.

1.4 Everyday world

In the context of everyday life the notion of death is forgotten.[24] We are naturally predisposed to neglect the subject due to its quality of being a "burdensome aspect of existence".[25] Instead,

death seems to be valid only when encountered as a "publicly occurring event".[26] It does not seem to be immediately affecting us in a physical sense, although ontically speaking, it is imminent to our present time. In fact, it is located within our existential being. Heidegger calls this conscious forgetting a 'positive' characteristic[27] which allows Dasein to familiarize itself with and dwell among other beings, defining the materiality of its being as the "essential constitution of being-in-the-world".[28] Through the mechanism of forgetfulness, Dasein is able to "retain things"[29] from its quotidian experience, becoming free from an otherwise pervading existential angst.

Everydayness is a practical adoption of average existence.[30]

The fundamental property of the quotidian is repetition — a recurring encounter with other "objectively present" beings.[31] By the basis of repetition is one accustomed to these beings. In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze explicates repetition as the base in which difference is created. Repeatedly iterated elements lose the importance of being recognized; they are, "enacted instead of being known".[32] The memory of the repetition remains repressed in the unconscious,[33] becoming "alienated and [displaced] outside [the self]".[34] Repetition, in this way, creates forms that are "naturally devoid of memory",[35] and quotidian space becomes familiarized. In the experience of everyday architecture, remembrance or recognition of architectural qualities or their essence become less distinctive, when repeatedly experienced day after day.

Over time, one becomes acclimatized to places of dwelling. Architectural materials, forms, scales, and details gradually dissolve into the banal noise of the everyday and perform as an extension of our body with which we spatially orient ourselves. In this context, everyday architectural space becomes intimately integrated into our senses, becoming a constitutive part of our bodily ego.

1.5   Notion of death in everyday space

Death is the "initial breach from the everydayness"[36] of Dasein. Only through discovering death in its existential being, the totality of Dasein's everydayness is dismantled. In Deleuze's analysis of Claude Monet's series of paintings of *La Cathédral de Rouen,* each painting renders architectural qualities of the building in distinctive conditions. According to changes in weather and time of the day, the façade of the cathedral is differently portrayed in each of its iterations. The combination of lighting, reflection, and colours employed in each are unique

from the others, each piece emanating exclusive essence of familiar everyday space. In this case, Monet's paintings demonstrate how repetition in the everyday world creates difference which tears away "the anonymity of day-to-day life".[37] Each generated representation is, whether subtlely or drastically, different from previous incarnations.

> Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it.[38]
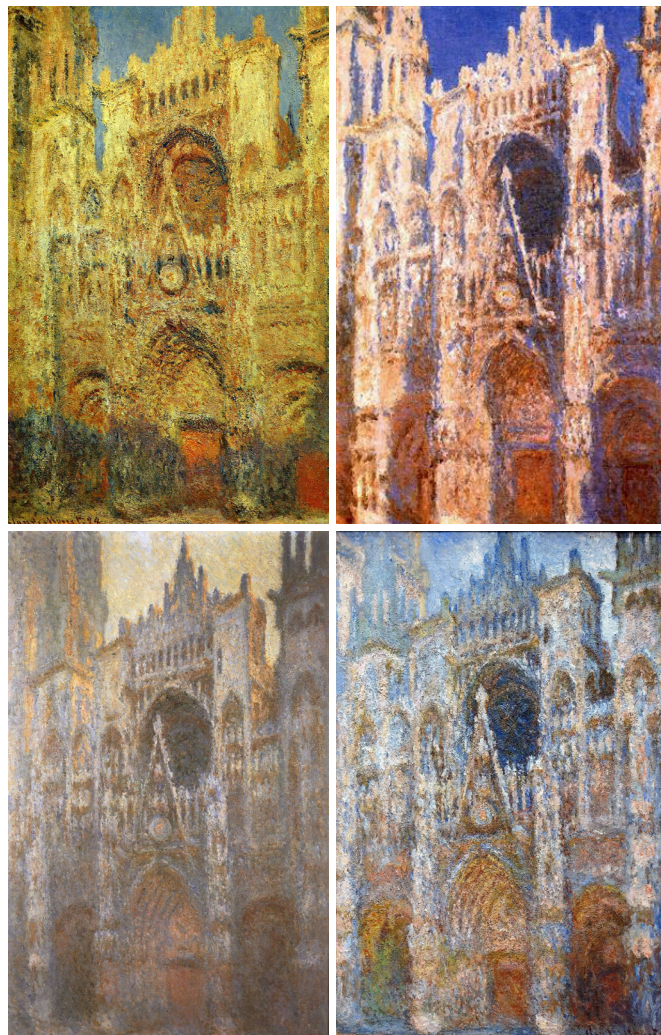
Fig. 1 *La Cathédral de Rouen* Painting Series by Claude Monet, 1894.

Difference in Dasein's everydayness is not created by an advent of something new, but is derived from the process of variation within itself. As Deleuze mentions quoting Hume, it is our perception that generates difference in everydayness, not the nature of repetition itself.

> "Angst... fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the 'world.' Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individuated, but as being-in-the-world, Being-in enters the existential 'mode' of not-being-at-home.[39]

Difference generated in repetition recalls the notion of death in one's own being. Discovering difference in repeated everydayness affects the way we relate to architectural space. As we switch to what Heidegger calls the "mode of attunement",[40] the familiar everyday world is banal no more, becoming instead something different and significant.[41] Upon the basis of this momentary shift, our bodies are defamiliarized from the realm of *heim*, suddenly feeling estranged and isolated. Difference disproves our already established conception of architectural space and makes the whole of previous experience completely strange to our senses. Anxiety thus "destroy[s] our illusion of having fixed and stable identity",[42] disintegrating our being from the context of everyday world.

1.6   Conclusion

The sense of belonging is a universal desire and fundamental value of the human, existential understanding of *being-in-the-world*. In everyday life, one absorbs the features of the surrounding world into one's body, familiarizing the senses to their physicality on the basis of repeated encounter. However, this familiarity is spontaneously destroyed upon recognition of difference that consists within variation of everydayness. In this shift of perception, existential angst — that dread felt toward the being for not knowing when and how the end will happen — is provoked. Through the being of Dasein, one realizes that the origin of death is not without but within the very own being. Thus, at the moment of realizing its disintegration from the world of *heim*, Dasein feels the unhomely, the negation of the totality of its possibilities as an existential being. And so too do we have the opportunity of this feeling, on a daily basis.

NOTES

1   E.T.W. Hoffmann, "The Sand-Man," in *Weird Tales*, trans. J.T. Bealby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 111-120.

2   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, ed. David McLintock and Hugh Haughton (London Penguin, 2003), 140.

3   Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. G. Stanley Hall (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 410.

4   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (2003), 159.

5   Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Harper, 1958), 13.

6   Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 412.

7   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein and Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 138.

8   Ibid., 252.

9   Ibid., 175.

10   Ibid., 49.

11   Ibid., 40.

12   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 44.

13   Ibid.

14   Ibid., 32.

15   Simon Critchley and Reiner Schümann, *On Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. Steven Levine (London: Routledge, 2008), 90.

16   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1996), 238.

17   Simon Critchley, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), 90.

18   Ibid., 102.

19   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (2006), 39-40.

20   Simon Critchley, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), 100.

21   Ibid., 101.

22   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (2006), 39.

23   Ibid., 44.

24   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1996), 312.

25   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (2006), 32.

26   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1996), 234.

27   Ibid., 41.

28   Ibid., 51.

29   Ibid., 312.

30   Simon Critchley, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), 95.

31   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1996), 51.

32   Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 14.

33   Ibid., 16.

34   Ibid.

35   Ibid.

36   Simon Critchley, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), 101.

37   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (2006), 44-5.

38   David Hume, cited in Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1994), 70.

39   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1996), 176.

40   Ibid., 183.

41   Simon Critchley, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), 90.

42   Jack Reynolds, *Understanding Existentialism* (2006), 44-5.

II

THE
UNCONSCIOUS

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we investigated the nature of everydayness in which the notion of death is forgotten. Because the subject is too dreadful and difficult to be held in our awareness, people subliminally force the thoughts that concern their existentiality out of the realm of the conscious mind. Nevertheless, they return unbidden, dismantling the perception of everyday reality. The mechanism of awareness is the fundamental foundation of the uncanny.

2.2 Unconscious

> The uncanny is uncanny only because it is secretly all too familiar, which is why it is repressed.[1]

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud introduces the idea of the unconscious through the personality structure. Ego and Id, which are the two constitutive parts of the mind, determine the boundary between what is known and what is unknown to our consciousness. *Ego* is the organized component which is consciously aware of the things absorbed by one's physical senses. It either fulfills or controls the desire of the Id. *Id*, on the other hand, is the unorganized part of the mind which governs the unconscious, and it compulsively attempts to expose itself to the outside.

Freud defines the unconscious as a reservoir of one's feelings, thoughts, and desires. It stores subliminal materials whose "stimulus to our senses is too slight to leave a conscious impression".[2] Hence, the unconscious is outside our everyday reality, secretly located "below the threshold of consciousness".[3] Driven by the force called *trieb* — a Freudian term which refers to urge, impulse, and desire — the unconscious affects our behaviours, decisions, and reactions to the external world without being known to our awareness. The particular process of one's memories of the past experience being "absorbed subliminally"[4] into the unconscious is called repression. We intentionally or subconsciously push things outside the perimeter of our consciousness because they have become too familiarized to our senses, or by their nature, they are "unacceptable or unpleasant, such as the feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict".[5] Jung argues that there is a limit to the capacity of consciousness,[6] hence, it cannot hold everything we perceive; instead, the conscious mind is extremely selective in choosing which information to retain and which information to repress in the territory of the unconscious. Since "conscious ideas lose their specific energy"[7] over time, we are inclined to forget what has become too familiar to our senses. The unconscious is, therefore, an entity of accumulated layers of one's past.

Memories of the past, especially of traumatic experiences, persist in the realm of the unconscious. Generally, one absorbs fear and anxiety more intensely than any other emotions because these are essential to the survival instinct. Developing a trauma pertaining to the situation which has triggered fear or anxiety is, thus, a way of preserving oneself from the source of threat in the future.

> The most remarkable coincidences of wish and fulfilment, the most mysterious repetition
> of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive
> sights and suspicious noises – none of these things will... raise the kind of fear which can
> be described as 'a fear of something uncanny.' [8]

2.3   Mechanism of Returning

Although forgotten in the everyday world, repressed thoughts continue to exist. They can, at any time, "rise again spontaneously",[9] exposing themselves beyond the radius of the unconscious. Hence, during the course of repression, there is a tension built up between the Ego and the Id — the Ego wanting to suppress the irrational conduct of the Id, while the Id, conversely, attempts to sporadically project its drives onto the field of everyday space.

The process in which subjects become repressed in the unconscious is subliminal to one's awareness. However, when the materials in the unconscious suddenly return to the conscious state, one experiences "psychological disturbances"[10] as the commonplace suddenly becomes strange to the senses. This returning mechanism of the unconscious is the key to Freud's conception of psychological trauma — recollecting one's past experience when "triggered by a perception of a present danger".[11] This déjà-vu-like phenomenon of recognizing the things that are somehow already familiar awakens one's memories latent in the unconscious. *Returning* thus creates a link between the present which is consciously being perceived and the past which is partially repressed.

Insofar as memories are retained in the unconscious, repressed "instinctual impulses"[12] will continuously attempt to reveal themselves. By means of compulsive repetition, the unconscious merely attempts to remind oneself of the irreparable loss in the past, creating "a fetishistic substitute" in "a fantasy [or] a simulacrum".[13] As a result, the tension between the Id and the Ego provokes traumatic anxiety, creating a precarious state in which the boundary between the past and the present is blurred — the uncanny space.

One afternoon, I found a brown leather bag I had lost few years ago folded in the corner of the closet. After I dusted it off, I found something in the front pocket. When I pulled it out, it was a piece of tissue paper that said *Albert Hejin* at the top right corner. The two words sounded familiar. Then immediately, I remembered that it was the name of the supermarket I used to go during my internship in the Netherlands. At the very moment, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the memories of the summer 2010 in Amsterdam.

It was a strange flashback. Only upon encountering the sign, I recalled the croissant I bought every morning on the way to work. Every time I passed by the market, it was hard to ignore the buttery smell that filled up the whole street. In a few bites, the croissant would melt in my mouth, and the tender texture soothed my morning grumpiness. It was not only the croissant, but I also remembered the damp air of the city in foggy days. When the sun finally came out, I spent lunch hours walking over the picturesque canals and eating oven-baked pizza with fresh arugula and cheddar cheese.

The two tiny words written on the tissue paper magically brought back all the memories of that summer in vivid details and a tint of nostalgia. My experiences must have been secretly hidden somewhere on my mind until they were triggered by a signifier – *Albert Heijin*. Although the name itself does not mean anything significant other than a franchise supermarket, every fragment of my memories associated with it returned all at once. The name has become a symbol for my past.

2.4   Signification

Then, what allows these feelings, desires, and thoughts to transgress the limit of the unconscious and intervene the realm of consciousness? Jacques Lacan, in his seminar *Anxiety [Angoisse]*, points out that "the unconscious is structured like a language".[14] He argues that each word behaves like a symbol, referring to certain ideas and concepts. Similarly, our memories are condensed into a symbolic signifier — usually a particular object or a place — which retrieves the materials embedded in the unconscious. A signifier is hardly recognized for its significance in daily life, but potentially connotes "something more than its obvious and immediate meaning".[15] This line of thinking confirms that things that are forgotten in the everyday world are not permanently extinguished from the consciousness but are temporarily held in the unconscious as symbols.

Generally, human memory has a limited capacity to hold every detail of the experience, and as a result, only certain parts are to be remembered as an emblematic moment to the whole experience. These moments constitute a set of symbolic signifiers which carry a particular quality or an essence of the place, associating one kind of space to the other. As a result,

architectural experience becomes augmented exponentially. The signifiers bring back the repressed memories from the unconscious to the present moment. They are a bridge between the now and the past. Therefore, as we unexpectedly recognize these signifiers in the context of the everyday world, the emotional experience repressed in the past all of a sudden returns and disturbs our sense of time.

> That there are in the unconscious signifying chains which subsist as such, and which
> from their structure, act on the organism, influence what appears from the outside as a
> symptom, this is the whole basis of analytic experience.[16]

Signifiers are like mnemonic codes embedded everywhere, and there are an infinite number secretly surrounding the quotidian space. This vast and complex network in the environment creates an architectural heterotopia for the unconscious mind, imbued with the unfamiliar — "something vague, unknown, or hidden from us."[17] Since the uncanny refers to what was once concealed and is now revealed in the open, it is situated neither in the private nor in the public space but within the world of heterotopia — the "sacred space".[18] The heterotopian quality of the uncanny neglects the binary division between *oikos* ("private, hidden world of the household" [19]) and *agora* ("political 'space of appearance'" [20]) but allows transgression of materials from one realm to the other; it is infinitely permeated with creative potential. Therefore, the uncanny space is both the physical and metaphysical thresholds between our conscious and unconscious minds, transforming its form, energy, and intensities at any time. The unfamiliar is simultaneously here, and there, now and then, subverting preconceived understanding of the space; through the process of signification found in our surroundings, we experience the architectural uncanny.

Signifiers are subjective matter. They are constructed solely based on one's personal experience, memory system, way of understanding the world, and level of emotional register. Hence, the intensity of the uncanniness also varies from individual to individual, as some respond to the signifying stimuli with stronger emotions, while others may find them not as stimulating.

In the winter 2011, I visited Kanazawa alone. It began as a short overnight itinerary, and I arranged to stay at a place called *Machiya* guest house. After a full-day bus ride from Tokyo, I finally arrived in the town. It was already after dusk, and the streets were dimly lit with few street lamps.

"Welcome."

The house manager was expecting me in front of the house. The building was a two-storey high traditional Japanese wooden house which seemed nearly two hundred years old. As I entered, I felt a chill in the air. I shivered a little, and the house manager apologized.

"I'm very sorry. This house does not have heating. We maintain this house in traditional ways. But don't worry, I have prepared an electrical heating mattress in your room."

He added that it was uncommon to have guests at that time of the year, since February was the coldest month in Kanazawa. I was the only guest staying that night.

"Call me if you need anything. I live couple blocks down the street."

The manager left with few instructions. I was all alone. I looked around, and the vast, empty space stared back at me. The living room was framed in frail wooden lattices, and a red lantern hung from the ceiling was the only light in the room. Overwhelmed with the strange atmosphere of the place, I hurriedly headed towards the bedroom on the upper floor. As I walked up the narrow staircase, each wooden tread squeaked loudly, filling up the whole space with its echo. The stairs led to a long, dark hallway. The bedroom was located at the end of the hallway, and I was intimidated with horror while walking past all those rooms with closed sliding doors.

The bedroom was even colder than the downstairs. I could see my breath. There was nothing in the room other than few blankets and the mattress. One wall was framed with a large window pane, and the other wall was entirely covered in wooden closet. I quickly climbed into bed and waited impatiently for the next morning. Hearing the sound of my own breathing underneath the blanket, I suddenly remembered watching disturbing scenes from Japanese horror movies such as a corpse's long hair endlessly spilling out of a closet and a dead girl slowly crawling into the bed. I imagined all kinds. Despite my effort to fall asleep, I spent the whole night feeling paralyzed under a violent turmoil of fear. I could not help myself sensing the eerie presence watching me. Having no one to share my experience or to validate my hallucination, I started to doubt myself. It was too real to be unreal.

The next morning, I woke up by the warm sunlight tickling my face. When I opened my eyes and looked around the room, I could not believe my own eyes. The place was completely transformed. The closet door of which I was afraid even to have a glimpse was an elegantly varnished wooden panel, layered with delicate rice paper at the back. The floor was laid out with classic *tatami* mats which added coziness to the room. When I went downstairs into living room, the house finally revealed its traditional beauty through minimal, yet, carefully built wooden frames, showing that it has gracefully aged over past few decades. I cracked into laughter. How I was so scared of all these things?

2.5   Between Dream and Reality

> A representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the
> real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking
> and dreaming. [21]

What was this 'presence' I sensed that night? The 'presence' was not a real thing but only a figment of my imagination. It was an idea constructed by the unconscious, possibly based on my previous experience of a place similar to the *Machiya* house or the scenes of the horror films I watched, or even based on my infantile anxiety of darkness and isolation as Freud points out. The memories that had been repressed in the unconscious were triggered by haphazardly found signifiers in the place, intertwining the physical context of the space with my imagination. The imagination was subliminally pressured by the tug-of-war between Id and Ego where the unconscious urges the exposure of repressed materials, with the conscious trying to stop such unexpected behaviour in order to interpret from a rational view.

My experience was, therefore, beyond the realm of physical reality. No longer an ordinary house, the place had become strange to my senses. Suspended in between the world of the real and the unreal, I was haunted by my own memories of the past. The house was familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

> An uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred,
> when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered
> imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes,
> and so forth. [22]

In the uncanny space, one's sense of time is disrupted, as the past intersects with the present. As a result, the space manifests a nostalgic sense of wanting to return home, to retrieve the old repressed memories from the unconscious. The emergence of the uncanny agitates the fixed status of everyday architecture, creating a new kind of space. It shifts the conventional paradigm of analyzing architectural experience by means of visually distinctive qualities, suggesting that there is latent potentiality of *becoming* in physical materiality of space.

Fig. 2 *Machiya* House

Fig. 3 *Machiya* House

NOTES

1   Sigmund Freud, as cited in Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992), 9.

2   Carl G. Jung, *Man and his Symbol*s, ed. M.-L. von Franz and John Freeman (London: Aldus House, 1964), 34.

3   Ibid., 23.

4   Ibid.

5   Ibid., 27.

6   Ibid., 34.

7   Ibid.

8   Immanuel Kant, as cited in Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1993), 7.

9   Carl G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (1964), 34.

10   Ibid., 27.

11   Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (1993), 31.

12   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, ed. David McLintock and Hugh Haughton (London Penguin, 2003), 145.

13   Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (1993), 36.

14   Jacques Lacan, as cited in Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy* (New York: New York Press, 2009), 23.

15   Carl G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (1964), 20.

16   Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V: The Formations of the Unconscious,* trans. Cornac Gallagher. (1957-1958). Unpublished.

17   Carl G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (1964), 20.

18   Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, "The Space of Play," *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 90.

19   Ibid., 87.

20   Ibid.

21   Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992), 11.

22   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (2003), 150.

III

AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS of the Uncanny

3.1   Introduction

In the previous section, we have looked into the unconscious and its projection through unexpectedly encountered objects — what we call signifiers. The question may be asked: retrieved emotional feelings and personal memories related to these objects play an important role in altering and transforming present perception of architectural space, but *how*?

In order to understand the nature of the uncanny, we need to first probe its aesthetic dimensions. By virtue of thematic similarities, the uncanny tends to be confused with other aesthetic categories such as the Sublime, the Grotesque, and Surrealism. In this section, we will investigate how these comparable aesthetic genres relate to the characteristics of the architectural uncanny.

3.2   Negative Pleasure of Kantian Sublime

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say; whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the Sublime.[1]

Fig. 4   Shelf Cloud Storm: A sinking downdraft of the storm cloud flooding over the land

The photo above illustrates a body of massive shelf cloud formed by a storm. The looming clouds are about to engulf the human-inhabited land. There is tension between the tsunami-

like clouds appearing on a supernatural scale and the houses on a comparatively smaller scale. The picture provokes us to imagine the next scene in which the houses helplessly disappear into the dark clouds, and as such, the man-made structure seems vulnerable in the face of the violent force of nature. Since we can personally relate to the scale of the houses, the danger manifested in the scene affects us as an audience, threatening our physical security, which results in anxiety. Furthermore, the photo also captures an air of mystery. From behind the clouds a strange light glows, illuminating the grey sky. The unusual, yet alluring, blue light adds a sense of wonder to the scene. As a result, the illustration represents the idea of the Sublime, projecting a notion of both fear and pleasure simultaneously.

3.3   Attraction and Repulsion: Paradox of the Uncanny

Like in the sublime, a negative pleasure of the uncanny is also provoked by one's primordial instinct for self-preservation. We feel overwhelmed by the clouds in the picture because of its massive scale that seems impossible to grasp in its entirety. Kant, in *Critique of Judgement*, explains that sublimity triggers a feeling of displeasure, because its magnitude is inestimable by human understanding. The greatness of scale extends beyond human capability to imagine the object in totality. Thus, only through the *idea of reason* — the cognitive ability that is higher than the power of imagination — can we eventually discover its gift of freedom which allows us to acquire knowledge of what could not be comprehended through the physical senses. It is the "power of resistance of quite another kind"[2] that makes it possible for us to "measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature".[3] Concurrently, we realize that the "external disorder"[4] of the object does not in reality threaten our internal world because as observers, we are outside the frame of the actual scene. The anxiety of not being able to understand the totality of the natural event can now be resolved with a peculiar pleasure arousing from the "reflective judgement in the subject".[5] Within this shift in the cognitive process, one discovers the "supersensible side of being".[6]

Similarly, in the uncanny space we feel both the sense of familiarity and unfamiliarity. There is a notion of pleasure in recognizing architectural quality of a certain place based on previous experience. Through encountering a signifier, one is able to retrieve memories of the past and thereby relate oneself to the architectural space. However, a feeling of displeasure suddenly overrides, as something unfamiliar is detected in the space. There is something strange and inexplicably odd pervading the air, and its source cannot be identified by logical judgement but only intuitively sensed. The previously constructed understanding of the space is negated; thus, the sense of familiarity of the place is annihilated, leaving only doubts and

uncertainties. At this point, one's cognitive faculties are challenged to unravel the mystery, to interpret the phenomenon in one's own terms; however, the 'something' still remains unknown, hence, we can no more relate ourselves to the space nor to our memories associated with it. In the uncanny space, the pleasure of sensing familiarity is displaced with a sudden shock of realization that one's perception has been subverted.

3.4   Darkness and Silence

As discussed in section 1.1, darkness is the most common phenomenon which provokes the fear of isolation. In the dark, everything of the sight becomes hidden, concealed, and obscured, becoming entirely strange to the senses; its situation represents alienation from the world of familiar, predictable, and reliable things. Thus one feels anxious about being surrounded by the unknown, being afraid of the "intellectual uncertainty",[7] as the psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch calls it. In terms of a domestic setting, a dark space is usually associated with enclosed interior space such as a closet or basement. Confined within walls, these spaces evoke a feeling of being trapped inside. Dark spaces are not as actively used as the other main quarters of a house such as the living room, and this lack of use augments the secretive nature of the space.

Darkness has been widely used in literatures, arts, cultures, and religions as an allegory referring to the world of death, the devil, the forbidden, etc. In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante describes the inferno as the world immersed in darkness that permits no vision, mercy, nor trace of life.

> And I found I stood on the very brink of the valley
> Called the Dolorus Abyss, the desolate chasm
> Where rolls the thunder of Hell's eternal cry,
>
> so depthless-deep and nebulous and dim
> that stare as I might into its frightful pit
> it gave me back no feature and no bottom.[8]

Darkness also alludes to one's inner world of the unconscious. There, the hidden desires, thoughts, and feelings are projected onto its depthless space. Darkness separates one from the rest of the world, creating the moment of direct confrontation with one's own inner beings. In this zone of the unknown, the mysterious force of nature which refuses to reveal itself seems rather attractive. Darkness provokes one's imagination to fill in the missing

gaps in the knowledge of reality. While continuously stimulating the creative energy, it also amplifies the existential anxiety, revealing one's own imminent death. A dark space is the most fundamental, yet powerful, form of phenomenon in everyday space.

3.5   Between the dead and the living

In Hoffman's *Sandman*, Olimpia's human-like appearance confuses others in determining whether she is alive or not. Because of her close resemblance to humanness, yet with subtle differences, the automaton carries an essence of death within her. Olimpia does not belong to the grouping of human being nor to that of a simple mechanical robots, but exists as an entity somewhere in between the two. In 1970, a robotic engineer Masahiro Mori established an interesting hypothesis with respect to objects bearing resemblance to human beings in his work, *Uncanny Valley [Bukimi no Tani]*; he proposed that, if the appearance and motion of a robot is too much alike of that of a human, it would provoke a certain feeling of eeriness, in other words, that of the uncanny.[9] We generally think that inanimate objects around us should remain dead. However, when this law of nature is breached, not only do we feel confused but also endangered by the sudden inversion and proximity of these dead things to our everyday life. The instinct considers that self-preservation is at stake.

This phenomenon also applies to one's architectural experience. A dead space, in architectural context, is not necessarily devoid of people but is a place which lacks the essence of vivacity. This liveliness refers to the nature of the homely, everyday space that is considered to be safe and predictable under any circumstances. Hence, in a dead space, a sense of belonging and connectedness to one's world of the familiar is lost. One is left only with a feeling of anxiety and insecurity.

In the late December of 2013, an enormous ice storm hit eastern parts of Canada. The City of Toronto experienced a power outage for a considerable amount of time, ranging from a few days to over a week, depending on the region. At night, the streets were covered in complete darkness. Not only were streetlights out, but all of the office buildings, stores, malls, and houses also suffered from the blackout. In the total darkness, people spilled out onto the streets to seek help and stay with their neighbours for comfort, despite the cold weather. While the municipal government was reported to be working on recovery of the power supply, the city was filled with the air of unspoken fear; this fear was of the unknown that was out of any immediate human control.

Fig. 5 A metropolitan-scale of blackout creating a scene of a dead city. Caused by an ice storm, the power outage affected more than 300,000 homes across the the City of Toronto, 2013.

Toronto's example shows that a dead space is not only manifested through being isolated in the dark, but also through losing the essence of liveliness. As the familiar scene of everyday space transforms into 'the Other' which now is hostile and antagonistic to one's existential being, the uncanny is generated.

3.6   Material Deterioration

> 'the aim of all life… is death'. In this model the essence of the drive is its conservative nature, its homeostatic goal; death becomes immanent to life, and life a 'detour to death.[10]

Another symptom of a dead space is material deterioration. A denatured state of architectural material such as discoloured wall and rusted metal surface is self-indicative of its time and history. The dead space embodies destructive forces of nature whose violent impulses permeate through the physical materiality of architecture. Arrested at the time of its past, there is neither present nor future but only an inclination to regress towards the material's state of death — "the primordial condition to which life is recalled".[11]

This concept of denaturalization was sublimated into sculptures and land art by an American artist, Robert Smithson, in the 1960s and 70s. He was interested in the idea of entropy — "a condition that is moving towards a gradual equilibrium"[12] — and carried out onsite installations such as *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970). In this project, he poured earth on top of an abandoned woodshed, and allowed natural forces such as the rain and wind to interfere with the architectural structure, recognizing beauty in the process of its materiality turning into the most basic elements of earth.

Fig. 6 Robert Smithson's Installation, *Partially Buried Woodshed*, 1970

Energy is more easily lost than obtained, and that in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all-encompassing sameness.[13]

Smithson's work parallels the Freudian idea of the compulsive desire to return to an earlier state of nothingness. The disintegration of form and material shows that architecture is also subject to the slow cycle of life that moves towards death. Although architectural materials become eroded, decayed, and faded over time, there is a kind of beauty that subtly pleases the eye. Like in the aesthetic of the Japanese *wabi sabi*, there is beauty in the impermanent and imperfect condition of natural objects that fulfills our aesthetic desire. The idea of *wabi sabi* expresses integrity in the transience of physical materials while embracing our vulnerability to the forces of nature.

3.7 Convulsive Beauty

The uncanny space is driven by the death instinct. Its traumatic nature simply wants to repeat the time of its past. Freud explains in *Beyond Pleasure and Principle* that the death instinct seeks for a peculiar "pleasure [] felt in destruction and desire aroused by death",[14] triggered by the repressed unconscious. It is conformance to one's "instinct of self-preservation",[15] in a way partially destructive and partially self-pleasing. The death instinct creates a paradox of fear: being afraid of the inevitability of death while feeling a sense of relief in confirming that one is not in the immediate danger.

In this context, the uncanny space relates to the surrealist idea of convulsive beauty which "mixes delight and dread, attraction and repulsion".[16] André Breton coins this term in his novels *Nadja* and *Mad Love*, illustrating the death instinct as the fundamental element of the *marvelous [merveilleux]*. In the "veiled-erotic"[17] objects like a mannequin, there is an underlying urge to animate the inanimate; whereas in the "fixed-explosive"[18] such as in Piranesi's drawing of ruins, there is an impulse to restore time to the past. Both kinds of the *marvelou*s express the repressed desire of liberating oneself from restraints, a behavior which is self-destructive, at the same time, strangely beautiful.

There is a sense of compulsiveness in this kind of peculiar aesthetics. We are inherently driven by the compulsive instinct to repeat, since the repressed desire is never fulfilled. Freud points out that trauma is not inflicted from a single event, but happens through a recurrence of the experience in similar situations. The mechanism operates in an endless cycle, and within that process we encounter things which signify that particular event and potentially become overwhelmed with a feeling of the uncanny. The impulse of the unconscious trying to unveil itself continues, and in every event our experience is recontextualized.

3.8 Objective Chance

The concept of the uncanny is also found in Fantastique literature. In his seminal work, *The Fantastic: A structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov describes two kinds of the fantastic: the fantastic marvelous and the fantastic uncanny. The marvelous is the supernatural which actually happens in reality, hence, its characters and the reader are challenged to break supposed laws of nature in order to accept the logic of the story. In the fantastic uncanny, on the other hand, the *étrange* [the strange] turns out to be something of non-existence or false. The story ends with the characters realizing that events were only a delusion created by their imagination, thus the law of nature is not violated. Therefore, the idea of *l'étrange* is a critical component of the uncanny.

The uncanny experience of a place is something of unexpectedness. The space intends to be thoroughly observed and identified albeit with a subtle strangeness that stirs anxiety while inducing a sense of wonder. There is a feeling of discomfort manifested in the space that mysteriously leads to the unpleasant thought of death (or self-extinction). In Breton's explanation of objective chance, this strange object, *l'étrange*, is described as the enigmatic signal that provokes the repressed desire of the unconscious.[19]

The signifier provokes an act of discovering and decoding the unfamiliar in the space of familiarity, and there is a "hysterical confusion between internal impulse and external sign".[20] The uncanny space creates an architectural version of déjà vu. Even if the place has never been experienced before, one finds something that is strangely familiar, something that reminds oneself of a traumatic experience in the past. As a result, the familiar is superseded by the strange, disrupting one's spatiotemporal reality with inexplicable anxiety.

Upon discovering *l'étrange,* one feels overwhelmed with an emotional shock, soon realizing that no longer is there belonging to the place but only alienation. The existential anxiety – the fear of confronting the notion of death in oneself — creates a "conflict of judgment, a clash of different models of the real".[21]

Both the surrealist works and the uncanny space deals with the idea of the unconscious materialized as part of reality. The obscured boundary between the real and the unreal reconstitutes and transforms the space into a new kind of world that is imbued with potentials and possibilities of becoming Other. They both operate on the plane of our faculty of imagination, creatively exposing the repressed impulses of our hidden desires. Since the ability and energy of our unconscious is indeterminate in a rational sense, the uncanny space must be always the Other, the unknown that is impossible to be comprehended via conventional understandings of architecture.

NOTES

1   Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 58.

2   Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Critiques: The Critique of Pure Reason* (Radford, VA: A&D Publishing, 2008), 556.

3   Ibid.

4   Ibid.

5   Ibid.

6   Ibid., 64.

7   Ernst Jentsch, as cited in Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 52.

8   Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. John Ciardi (New York: New American library, 2003), 39.

9   Masahiro Mori, "The Uncanny Valley," trans. Karl F. MacDorman and Norri Kageki in *IEEE Robotics & Automation Magazine* (June, 2012: 98-100).

10   Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993), 10.

11   Ibid., 25.

12   Robert Smithson, in an interview with Alison Sky, 1973), *Robert Smithson: The collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (London: University of California Press, 1996), 301.

13   Ibid., 10.

14   Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (1993), 13.

15   Ibid., 33.

16   Ibid., 28.

17   Ibid., 25.

18   Ibid.

19   Ibid., 31.

20   Ibid., 30.

21   Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, ed. David McLintock and Hugh Haughton (London Penguin, 2003), xlix.

IV

TIME
OF THE
UNCANNY

In order to understand the complex nature of the uncanny space, we first need to investigate its temporal nature which is an integral part of the experience. Based on Heideggerian understanding, time exists only when one is consciously aware of it. As an indicator of the temporality of our existential being, time offers a "moment of vision"[1] as seen through the being of Dasein.

4.1 Apperceiving the Uncanny

The architectural experience of the uncanny requires a certain length of time to comprehend 'what is happening in the space'. Upon encountering strangeness, one immediately seeks to find its cause, but such resolution is not possible. As such, the viewer carries on failing to decode its mysterious nature, and anxiety only grows in intensity.

According to Kant's theory of *Transcendental Deduction*, one recognizes an object or an event in three sequenced movements: the sensible, the *intelligible*, and reason.[2] First, the *sensible* is the data collected from the sense organs based on one's subjective emotions and sensitivity to stimuli.[3] The next phase is the intelligible, in which the information that can be organized is identified based on a certain conception.[4] The last step, proceeded by, and termed according to, the faculty of *reason*, is a systemization in which related ideas are gathered into categories.[5] However, in apperceiving the uncanny, the transitional process from the sensible to the intelligible fails, hence the space cannot be identified nor related to any other kinds. Since the space has become completely new and strange, any previously conceptualized understandings of the place are no more applicable. It is thus impossible to recognize the space.

This process can be further explained by the way we cognize grotesque elements. The term grotesque was originally derived from the Italian word *grotta* which is associated with the notion of grotto — a cave or a "hidden place".[6] In the illustration below, we recognize animal figures. Each of the individualized elements that constitute the whole picture can be easily identified and conceptualized due to their familiarity. However, when we survey the illustration as a single unified entity, we can no more recognize it as something we are familiar with. The figure looks absurd and ridiculous because it cannot be conceptualized according to any form of symbol or representation.

Fig. 7 Giuseppe Arcimboldo's allegorical painting, titled *Water* (1566) looks like an image of an old woman when viewed from a distance, however, the figure is actually a combination of water creatures such as fish, coral, shells, etc. Depending on the distance between the painting and the viewer, the image constantly recreates itself, shifting from one identity to the other.

Hence, the gestalt whole is incomprehensible neither with our intellect nor reason, becoming grotesque in our eyes. In these two phases — appraising the picture in parts and then in entirety — the elements cognized in relation to one's sensibility do not correspond to one another, resulting in the interval in between them being filled with uncertainty and anxiety given the repeated failure of comprehension. Thus, the recognition of the whole picture is eternally delayed. In grotesque figures, the form is continuously reinvented into a new kind corresponding to the shifting gaze. In each reading, the figure indicates something foreign to the previous conception, making it impossible to give it a permanent identity. Thus, the

viewer remains a question, wondering "what 'it' is" that disturbs one's cognitive reading in between "the perceived and the unperceived".[7] The grotesque, therefore, subverts the hierarchy of our cognitive faculties.

> They [Grotesqueries] stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown.[8]

As in the process of cognizing the grotesque, it is also challenging to identify the 'strangeness' of the uncanny space. A place which used to be familiar becomes suddenly unfamiliar, and there is only a feeling of discomfort and anxiety pervading the space. The previous understanding of the space is negated; hence it can be sensed via intuition but cannot be conceptualized with reason. Despite repetitive attempts to identify the uncanniness of the space, the audience helplessly returns to the point of being completely clueless. The uncanny is thus outside our consciousness, beyond our ability to conceptualize. The fear of the uncanniness — the unknown — is created at this juncture. Wolfgang Keyser elucidates on the idea of 'it' — the unknown – that has been disdained and forbidden since olden times, because 'it' is frightful, inhumane, and destructive of human nature.[9] The uncanny space constantly transforms through time, and the changes are not only physical but also psychologically stimulating, creating an unfamiliar species each time.

4.2   Temporality of the Uncanny

<Moment of the Unexpected>
There is no objective measure to predict the beginning and the end of the uncanny. Cognizing its emergence into materiality is a subjective matter, and it requires one's attentive sensitivity to the surroundings in order to be fully immersed in the space of the uncanny on both emotional and perceptual levels. The uncanny emerges at an unexpected moment. Furtively embedded in the quotidian space, it awaits the moment it can suddenly subvert our everyday meaning, pushing into the unfamiliar. The uncanny happens "all at once",[10] vigorously agitating one's instinct for self-preservation. It is a moment of intense shock, as one's *heim* becomes a complete stranger to oneself.

<The Unending Duration>
Due to the dissonance between intellectual judgment and the emotional sensing of the space, the duration of the experience is endlessly protracted, amplifying already existent fear of

the unidentified. Lacan describes the uncanny as "a state of alert",[11] in which one expects the unknown to reveal itself. However, there never seems to be a clear answer as to its true identity; in fact, it may not exist at all. So then, what is it that makes us keep waiting? The time of comprehending the uncanny is an incessant interplay between trial and failure, and for the duration, there is no future allowed. This subversion of temporality indicates that past is always living in present, or as Bergson puts it in *Matter and Memory*, our past inconspicuously affects the state of present life through the agency of memories.[12]

<Disrupted Time>
As in the story of Kanazawa, the uncanny experience is the past rehashed in the realm of the present time. Oscillating between the 'then' and 'now', the repressed memory ultimately overrides the rational mind. The boundary between the past and present is blurred, and their strange rendezvous violates the rules of nature, creating a space of *the Other*.
The diagram below illustrates the effects of emergence of the uncanny in our everyday space. Moments in the past become liberated from subjugation,[13] interfering the context of the present reality. This phenomenon is analogous to the conflict between the Ego and the Id in which the unconscious abruptly invades the property of consciousness.
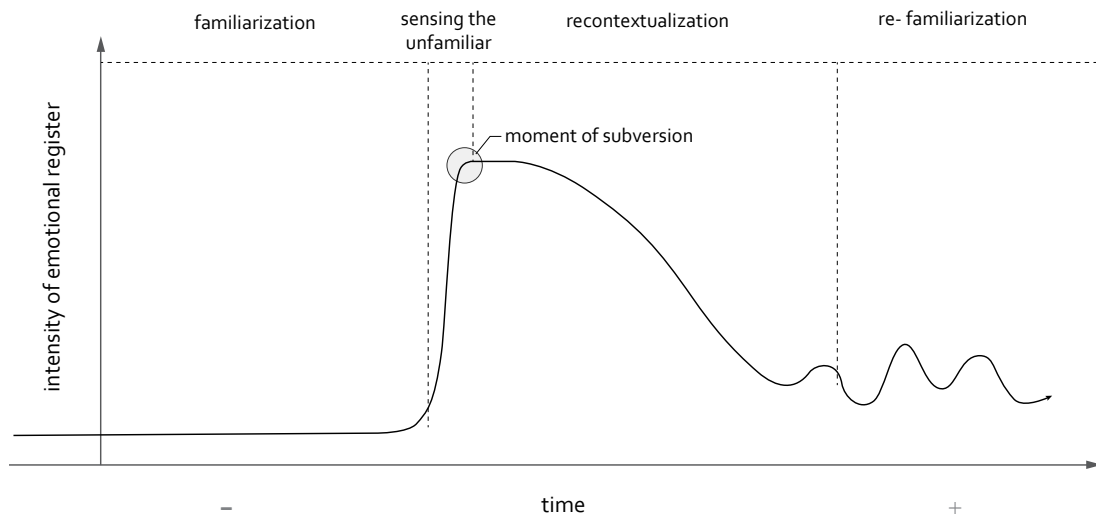

Fig. 8   Intensity of emotional register of the uncanny

4.3 Time of Becoming

The uncanny is the time of *becoming,* transitioning from one state of being to the other. In the time of becoming, comprehension of the space is consistently interrupted by the reading of other factors that jeopardizes the notion of *heim*; as a result, the suspended perception of the space becomes trapped in the cycle of eternal return, "not of being and the same, but of becoming and difference".[14] What enables this 'becoming' is the "durational force"[15] which structures the fundamental temporality of the uncanny. Deleuze describes as such an "operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality, or a system".[16]

Our experience of everyday architecture continuously makes for internal differentiation, and within the duration of the temporality, the uncanny emerges. The repetitive nature of the everyday produces the moment of the past superimposed upon the realm of the present.

> Becoming of life is the unbecoming of matter, which is not its transformation into (inert) being, but its placement in a different trajectory of becoming." [It is] the very motor of becoming, making the past and present not given but fundamentally ever-altering, virtual.[17]

In the moment of the uncanny, the nature of a place comes undone, deconstructed of its essence of familiarity. It defies to the linear path of time, displacing the present with the past. The uncanny space is the space of 'unbecoming', a victim of unexpected mutations and variations of the durational force of life. Through the time of the uncanny, we become conscious of the things *becoming* in our life. As Heidegger emphasizes in *Being and Time,* temporality is the fundamental condition that enables the understanding of our existential nature.

NOTES

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    1963), 43.

10 Jacques Lacan as cited in Anthony Vidler, *The
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    Palmer (London: G. Allen, 1912), 170-180.

13 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans.
    Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University
    Press, 1994), 6.

14 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans.
    Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone, 1983), 48.

15 Elizabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the
    Becoming of Unbecoming", in *Parallax,* Vol. 11
    No.2 (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4-13

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

V

PLACE
OF THE
Uncanny

Experiencing place is not reducible to a set of objective properties. But nor does the experience of place depend wholly n a sociopolitical context. Instead... attention is drawn to the existential significance of place.[1]

5.1   Phenomenology of the Architectural Uncanny

Previously we investigated the nature of the architectural uncanny on a philosophical and psychoanalytical level. However, it remains a question what the actual form of the uncanny is. Where is it located? How is it constructed? Does it have a physical body that is spatially coordinated? In this section, these questions will be addressed from the phenomenological perspective.

5.2   Registering the Uncanny Feeling

The uncanny exists in a moment. It is an ephemeral event that appears and disappears. The uncanny itself is not a tangible matter; nevertheless, its physical entity affects our senses. A phenomenon is by Deleuze's definition, "a sign [or] a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force".[2] In this context, it must be clarified that a phenomenon is not just "an appearance or even an apparition"[3] but a real substance that has materiality of its own kind. Although cognized only through physical senses, and subsequently not confineable to rational concept, the uncanny space is more than a simple construct of mental images — it is a physical, architectural space. What appears in the space is certainly registered by means of its visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory characteristics. Among these sensory data there are symptoms of the unconscious, especially those repressed desires, emotions, memories, etc.; they are, however, covertly and tactfully hidden, making them impossible to be identified with mere conscious perception. Consequently, we find our intellect incapable of comprehending the strangeness of the place.

Nevertheless, there are two things in the uncanny space that can be rationally verified: *affect* and *intensity*. Deleuze defines *affect* as the "force of existing" that makes "continuous variation"[4] in another body. Once the uncanny makes an entrance into the scene, the affect exerts its power upon one's body when it finds itself in relationship to the space, destabilizing the sense of belonging. The impetus of the place is highly intense, to the point that it urges the unconscious to intrude upon the realm of consciousness. This intrusion creates tension between the Ego and the Id, triggering one's internal world to be projected onto the physical

reality. The affect has a unilateral impact on the body; henceforth the affected can only receive the action of the phenomenon in a passive manner.

In the perception of the uncanny space, *intensity* is also a critical factor. In Deleuzean definition, intensity refers to "the form of the difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible".[5] On a conceptual level, the feeling of the unfamiliar is derived from discovering a subtle difference between the place of the present moment and that of the past which surprisingly resembles the physical materiality of the space. Within the two disparate, yet identical, images, the uncanny emerges. According to Deleuze, "only that is alike differs; and only differences are alike."[6] The heterogeneous nature of architectural space thus allows the passing of energy "between the borders, [consequently] events explode, phenomena flash, like thunder and lightning."[7]

5.3   How Emotions Affect Creating the Uncanny

A change in emotions is the first symptom of the emergence of the uncanny. Emotions play an important role in arousing the repressed memories of the past experience. There are two "medial temporal lobe structures",[8] called the *hippocampus* and *amygdala*, which are the two independent memory systems in the brain. Hippocampus is the part that consolidates and stores memories, modulating the short-term and long-term memories.[9] The amygdala, on the other hand, conducts the "acquisition and psychological expression of conditioned fears".[10] The theory of amygdala-hippocampal interaction suggests that the amygdala has influence on the process of encoding and storing hippocampal-dependent memories; the hippocampus, in reverse, can influence the amygdala by "forming episodic representations of the emotional significance and interpretations of the events"[11] when stimulated by any emotional impetus. This bilateral interaction between the two neural systems indicates that emotions are strongly tied with memories. Especially in the case of fear, the amygdala affects our "ability to perceive and attend to emotional stimuli",[12] amplifying the intensity of the emotional experience. Such is the reason memories registered concurrently with strong emotions particularly have a "persistence and vividness that other memories seem to lack".[13] For example, Nathanael's neurotic trauma in *The Sandman* is a symptom of this interaction between emotions and memories. Nathanael's fictitious image of the Sandman is encoded with intense fear; accordingly, every time he encounters objects such as eyes, which are associated with the figure of the Sandman, his traumatic anxiety returns. In this case, the eyes are the signifier which triggers conditioned fear.

The uncanny is constructed within that moment in which the traumatic anxiety returns. It deforms our perception of the space, subverting the familiar with a feeling of uncertainty. There is a sense of danger pervading the space, and it prolongs anticipation of the manifestation of the unknown. One feels agitated given the fear of confronting the unknown sometime soon. Every time a signifier is found, the thought of losing one's world of familiarity recurs. In rational fact, the unknown does not exist manifestly but is limited within one's own unconscious; to think otherwise is the trick played by the Id.

5.4   Intensification

"It does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, only intensive ordinates. It has no energy, only intensities; it is anenergetic (energy is not intensity but rather the way in which the latter is deployed and nullified in an extensive state of affairs). The concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing".[14]

However, the intensity of the *affect* is not consistent throughout all kinds of uncanny spaces. Depending on the extent of the unconscious' materialization through signifiers, as well as an individual's sensitivity to emotional register of the uncanny, the intensity of the *affect* of the place varies. Here, subjectivity characterizes the issue, that the signs are constitutive of an individual's feelings, thoughts, and desires. Hence, one's recollections and imagination potentially project a completely different rendering of the experience according to the individual's memory and creativity.

The spectrum of individual sensitivity to the uncanny ranges from a slight feeling of discomfort (simply responding to the eerie, strange, and uncertain ambience) to a spatial paranoia (feeling powerless to the unidentified danger). As anxiety peaks, one becomes a victim entrapped in one's own *heim*. What used to be the homely has since turned antagonistic.

The intensity of the uncanniness depends on the signifier's scale and motion, as well as the degree of resemblance between the space and to that of one's memory.

<Scale>
The structural dimension and the multiplicity of a signifier determine the intensity of the uncanny. When a signifier is in the form of a single object, it may simply be observed; however, when the signifier indicates the whole space, it more certainly produces the

symptoms of the uncanny. In this case, one feels overwhelmed, as if being watched by a mass of threatening strangers.

This idea of feeling menaced by the Other's gaze is exemplified in Lacan's interesting anecdote of a sardine tin. On his fishing trip, Lacan discovers a can of sardine floating in the sea as pointed out by a fisherman who accompanied him. Realizing the irony of seeing a sardine tin in the water where real sardines are to be caught, the fisherman finds it amusing. However, Lacan feels extremely disturbed by it. As he looks at the can, the eye of the sardine on the cover looks back at him. What bothers Lacan even more is that the fisherman does not realize that the sardine is not an object they found, but it is a *subject* who is *gazing at them*.[15]

We generally see the world from a stance of the subject; 'I' am the centre of the world, and 'I' am the one watching the objects that are integrated in the world. However, in Lacan's case, 'I am being watched by the sardine's eye which is supposedly the object. Hence, the subject is no more the 'I' but the sardine that is looking at me, and my place in the world is replaced by the Other, the sardine. 'I' no longer exists, in other words 'I' has annihilated from my own world. The sardine's eye, for Lacan, is the signifier which triggers the feeling of horror. For the fisherman, the sardine tin is only a small object, but in Lacan's view, it is the entire world that threatens his isolated state. Therefore, as the scale of a signifier increases, the world of the familiar turns inside out for the viewer, augmenting the feeling of substitution from one's own realm of *heim*.

Fig. 9 A strange gaze: being watched by an anonymous crowd

<Motion>

The uncanny is also materialized through motion in the space. We expect certain movements in the architectural space to behave in a predictable way; for example, fixed objects like a piece of furniture must remain in the state of stasis, while everyday space like a house is to be actively occupied by families. However, this expectation is often overturned when the inanimate suddenly moves or when the living place ceases to be occupied by people. Depending on the duration, size, speed, and frequency of the motion in the space, the intensity of the uncanny varies. For instance, watching a long heavy curtain unexpectedly billowing in darkness manifests much less intensity of the uncanny than being in a deserted town where there is no sign of life or activities.

Fig. 10 Ghost Town of Fukushima after Japan's nuclear disaster in 2011

<Likeness>

The intensity of the uncanny is also determined by the degree of likeness between the present and the past. As the architectural space appears increasingly identical to the preconceived

image, one feels more disturbed about not being able to distinguish the difference. The discrepancy is too subtle to be noticed in a mere glimpse, seeing as it is created by transient qualities such as the lighting, movement, and activity, which all connote transitions in time. Accordingly, these changes in material conditions and functionality manifests a gap in between the two temporal realms.

Fig. 11 *Same Place, Different Space*: the preconceived notion of a place is, at cerain times, overriden by unfamiliar representations of the space.

5.5   Familiarization: Making Home

> Everyday space is a diffused landscape. It is banal, it's repetitive, it's everywhere and
> nowhere, it's a place that has few characteristics that people pay attention to.[16]

The uncanny tends to be triggered within the banal landscape of everyday architecture. We easily become familiarized with the "constancies of the world"[17] and develop fixed conceptions of architectural space based on form, material, ambience, etc. Familiarity is a way of contextualizing architecture in relation to our very own physical and existential beings; we get used to orienting our bodies around these spaces and place personal memories and ideas into their spatial contexts.

The key to this familiarization of the everyday world is repetition. An architectural space becomes embodied in our consciousness through its repeatedly verifying the "very facticity

of the surroundings".[18] As a result, essence and materiality of *heim* become familiarized with the senses. The nature of *heim* is, however, subject to change at any time. In fact, its structure is constantly changing and transforming, folding in and out of itself. In a physical sense, home is a place for dwelling, but there are more meanings on a conceptual level. In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger traces the linguistic root of the word in the German term *buan* - meaning 'building'. The word does not connote an outcome but an ongoing process of building through which we project our ideas, desires, and emotions into the materiality of architecture. Thus, as our internal world changes over time, *heim* also takes on new forms. Gaston Bachelard describes, in *The Poetics of Space*, that home is representative of a "large cradle"[19] which secures our sense of belonging, but it is also what "give[s] mankind proofs or illusions of stability."[20] Home is thus an affective body imbued with creative manifestations of our own existential beings, a symbolic object which then "augments the values of reality."[21]

5.6   Defamiliarization: Losing Home

Because everyday space is familiarized without being consciously known to our senses, we become more vulnerable to its nature. Heidegger argues that we understand our world in "referential totality";[22] we are overly engaged in the banality of everydayness, thus forgetting to attune to the "context of [its] equipment".[23] Within this realm of *heim*, the uncanny unexpectedly emerges and subverts the preconceived notion of architectural space. It is a shocking shift in our relationship with the space which labels us an outsider to the whole frame of familiarity. The very fundamental understanding of the world and of the self is at stake.

The uncanny is the unfamiliar itself. It shatters our sense of security, arousing the feeling of homelessness in our very own home. In Alejandro Amenábar's film *The Others* (2001), this subversive force of the architectural uncanny constructs a scene of horror. The story begins with the setting of an old mansion located in a remote countryside of England. The house is always shrouded in fog, and every window of the house is covered with thick curtains. Waiting for her husband to return from the war, Grace lives in this mysterious house with her two young children who are suffering from a rare disease because of which they have to avoid being exposed to the sun. To protect them, Grace obsessively walks around the house with a bunch of keys and locks every room before entering another one. One day, Grace and her children start to feel menaced by an unknown presence. The stranger seems to be living inside the house with them but never fully appears; hence, they assume that it is a kind of a

ghost or a spirit. It is not until the end of the story that the truth is revealed. Grace learns that the house in which she has been living for years was not actually her own; in fact, 'the other' presence — which she believed to be a ghost that haunts the house — was herself.

> 'The others' does not mean everybody else but me – those from whom the *I* distinguishes itself.[24]

There is a sudden shift between the intrinsic and the extrinsic nature of the house. Learning that one is outside the house — a physical or existential place to which one belongs — is an emotionally tormenting realization. Because home is considered the most secure place, its sudden change in quality, from the homely to the unhomely, threatens the assurance of one's own life. The subversion provokes innate existential anxiety, revealing the inmost fear of death in one's very own daily existence.

Home is accordingly simultaneously internal - hiding from the outside world — and external — revealing one's unconscious. The tension between the Ego and the Id continuously marginalizes one's desire to build a permanently homely place, given the fact that it is being a mere "illusion of coherence and safety."[25] Underneath the surface of the homely, there is the fear of losing connection to one's own home, of unwillingly becoming homeless. This analysis is nostalgic of wanting to return to *heim*. However, knowing that the unhomely already lives inside the homely, there is no place to return. As such, the mechanism of 'returning' to one's own heim makes the familiar unfamiliar. The uncanny is intensified as we suddenly shift our perception of home, dismantling the totality of our own existential being.

5.7   Body and Space

Architecture is an extension of one's bodily ego. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty elucidates the extensive capabilities of *body*. Beyond the extent of its biological functions, *body* embodies our memories and sensations of architectural experience.[26] It serves as a central way-finder for orienting oneself around the space and is a medium through which one absorbs and perceives the world. We all have different bodies, and thereby have different ways of remembering, different perceptions of scale, and different levels of sensitivity to architectural phenomena such as the uncanny. Body is the "centre of experience."[27]

     As we become accustomed to the quotidian space, architecture becomes part of our body. On an existential level, familiarization is made through identifying one's body with the

space; we become the place itself, and the place in reverse becomes an extension of our body. Bodily memories are often more powerful than conscious memories. Body encompasses the extent of the unconscious, storing memories in its very own "muscle". In the uncanny space, a signifier brings out these bodily memories and reshapes one's relationship with the place.

5.8   The place of abjection

Because of this intimate relationship between body and space, one's instinct for self-preservation is threatened as one disassociates from the realm of *heim*. This process of defamiliarization subsumes the process of self-individuation. According to Paul Schilder's theory of *body image*, we have an ideal concept of body as wholeness.[28] When this coherent image is shattered by losing a member of the body, the loss provokes an extreme fear of the annihilation of oneself. Body is always familiar to one's physical senses, however as it suddenly becomes foreign, the totality of one's ego splits. The notion of defamiliarization also applies in our everyday world. We repeatedly familiarize ourselves with everyday space to the extent that it becomes an extension of our body. However, upon discovering discrepancies between our ego's previous understanding of the space, and the projected image of the unconscious, we find our body's embodiment of the space suddenly foreign and strange. This marks a subversive moment of the uncanny in which our understanding of the

> For the space that engrossed the deject, the excluded, is never one, nor homogeneous, nor
> totalizable, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic.[29]

self and of the world become unfamiliar. What is stored in body can resultingly, and at any time, mutate the fundamental nature of banal everyday space.

The experience of defamiliarization creates an antagonistic relationship that morphs "the *specular I* into the *social I*".[30] Being opposed to one's own bodily ego is a form of denying oneself, unveiling the notion of death in one's existential being. This condition can be described with Julia Kristeva's term abjection — the fear created by separation from oneself. In *Powers of Horror*, she describes the nature of abjection with a mirroring analogy: a fear for the process of self-individuation generated by finding another copied image of the self in the mirror. The mirror is the space "where the Ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other",[31] and *the other* is the form manifested by the desire which has been long repressed in the unconscious.

Everyday space is, thus, simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar to the Ego. Bodily embodiment of architectural experience not only accumulates memories of a place but also builds a network of precarious links between the unconscious and physical reality. The uncanny space is, therefore, not entirely a new place; it is, in fact, an inverted model of our everyday space.
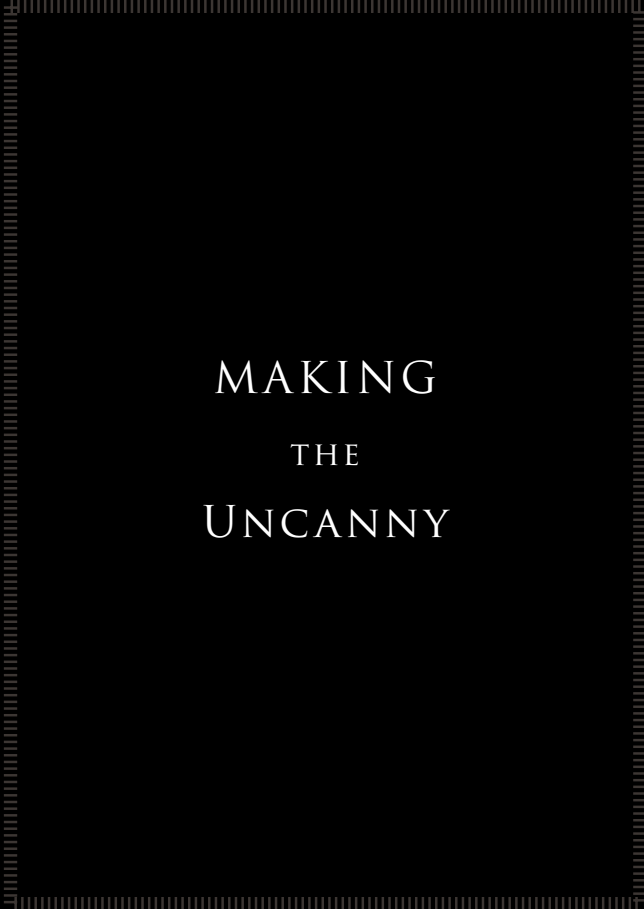
NOTES

1   Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenom-enology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2012), 162.

2   Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone, 1983), 3.

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8   Elizabeth A. Phelps, "Human Emotion and Memory: Interaction of the Amygdala and Hippocampal Complex", in *Current Opinion in Neurobiology 14* (2004), 198-202.

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15   Steve Pile, *The Body and the City* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 127.

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19   Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 7.

20   Ibid., 17.

21   Ibid., 3.

22   Simon Critchley and Reiner Schümann, *On*

23   *Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. Steven Levine (London: Routledge, 2008), 85.
     Ibid., 97.

24   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein and Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 118.

25   Alice Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.

26   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002), 183-207.

27   Ibid, 333.

28   Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1999), 286.

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31   Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror (1982), 9.

Conclusion

Originated from our existential nature, the phenomenon of the uncanny is deeply instilled in our daily relationship with architecture. Upon discovering a subtle, yet obscure, difference within variations of architectural experience, we are suddenly confronted with the most disturbing truth of our being — the notion of death living inside us. This shocking encounter dismantles one's reality of familiar everyday space. What provokes the uncanny is already embedded inside one's own *heim*, condensed to the form of a signifier; and unexpectedly, the signifier projects the unconscious onto the physical materiality and constructs discordance between the expected image and the actual presentation of the space. At that very moment, the subject 'I' is displaced with 'the Other', arousing fear of one's self-extinction from the world.

Therefore, the banal landscape of everyday space is always subject to the unpredictable force folding in and out and turning inside and out. The *affect* of the uncanny is powerful enough to destroy and to reconstruct one's understanding of architectural space, and this interplay of energy between the physical materiality and the unconscious opens up endless possibilities to creating new kinds of architectural forms. It is a process of *becoming* — constantly transforming and recontextualizing our place of dwelling.

The phenomenological study of the uncanny as speculated in this thesis, thus, suggests new ways of comprehending our sensory experience of architecture beyond the realm of the tangible. We have so far investigated the impact of our psychological and philosophical associations with the everyday world, associations which can freely shape human emotions and imaginations into infinite forms of architectural space. If we place more importance on the role of the indefinite realm between the real and the unreal, we will be amazed at the extent of our creativity in constructing architecture.

MAKING

the

Uncanny

Fig. 12 Advertsisement for the installation

A STRANGE INVERSION

Installation Exhibition

November 27-28, 2014
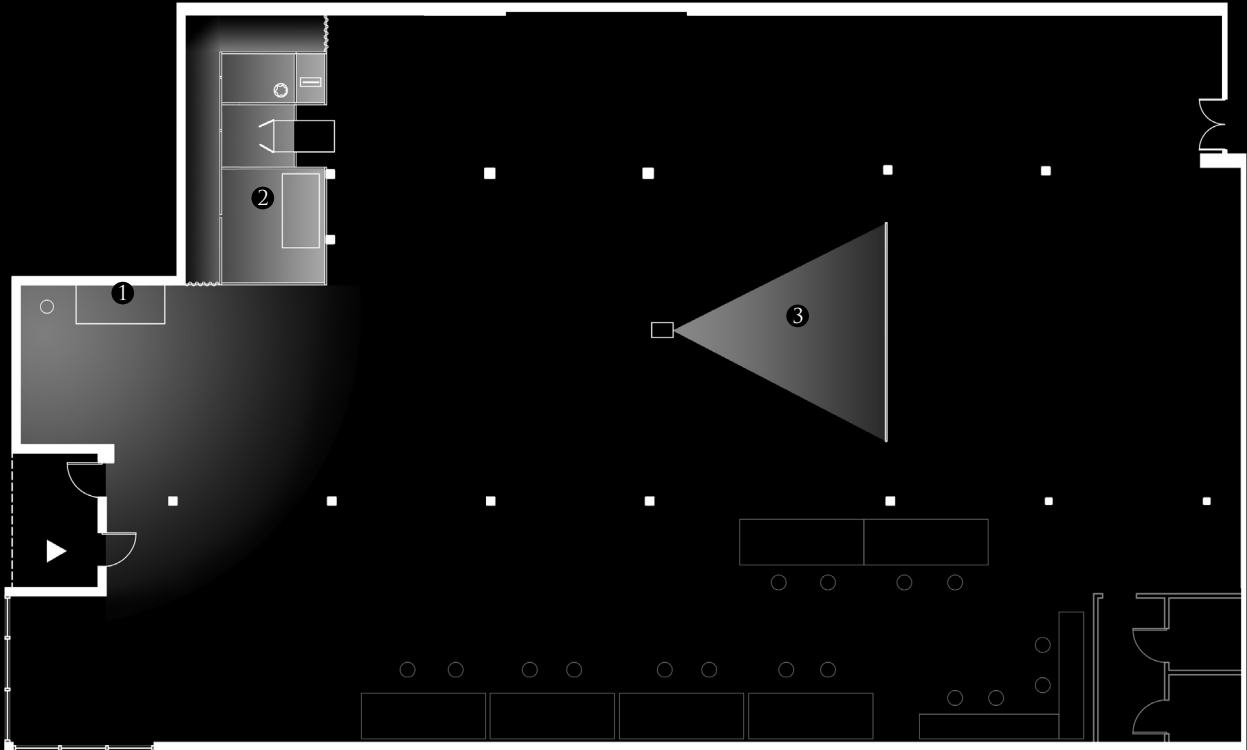
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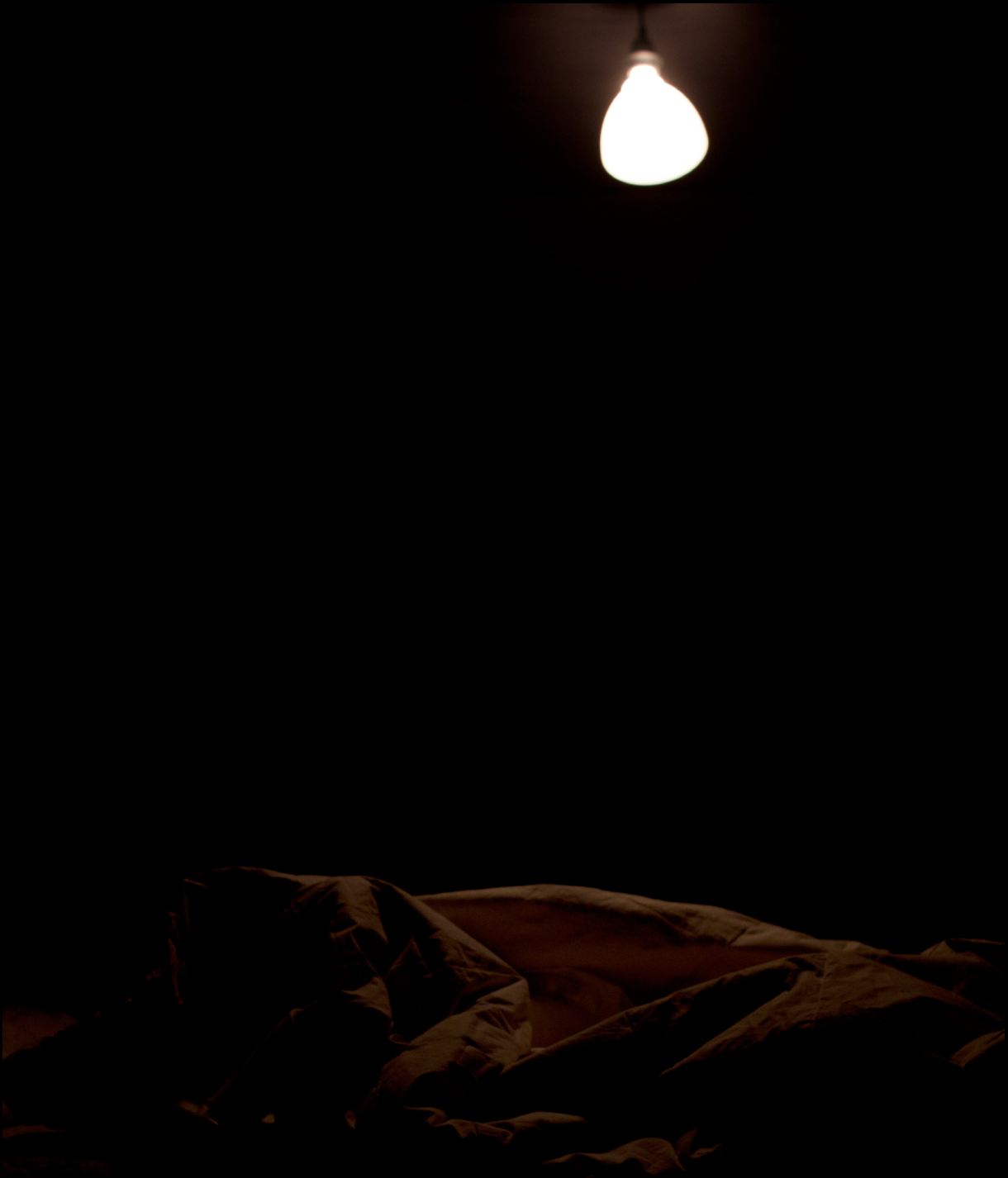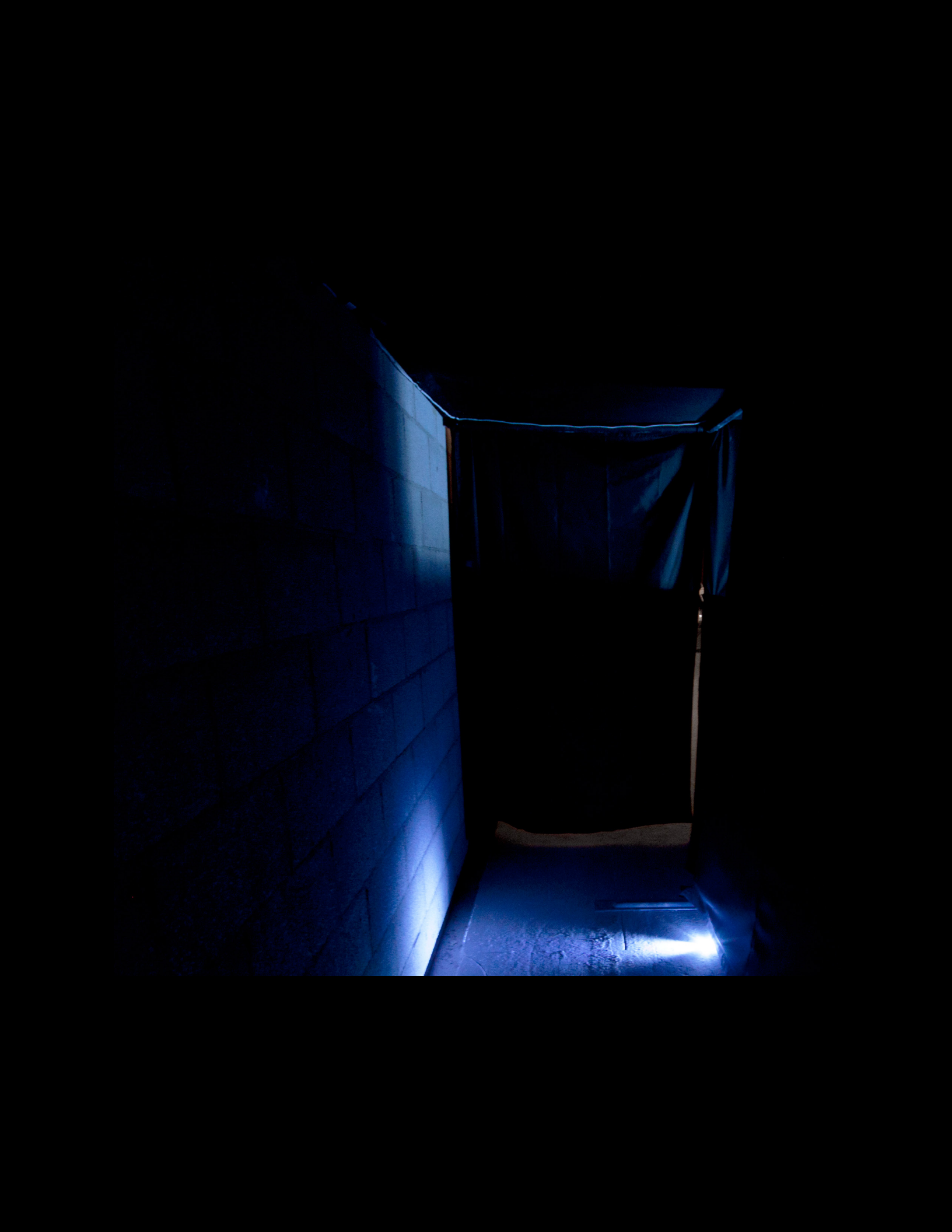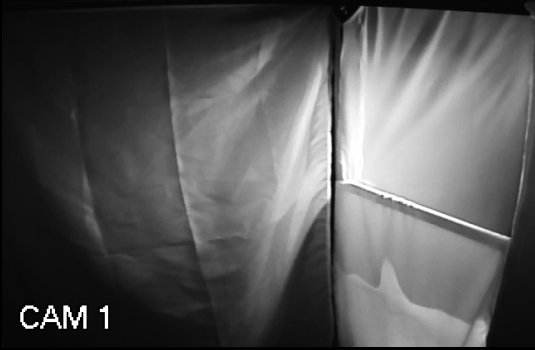2. INSTALLATION
3. PHOTO PROJECTION

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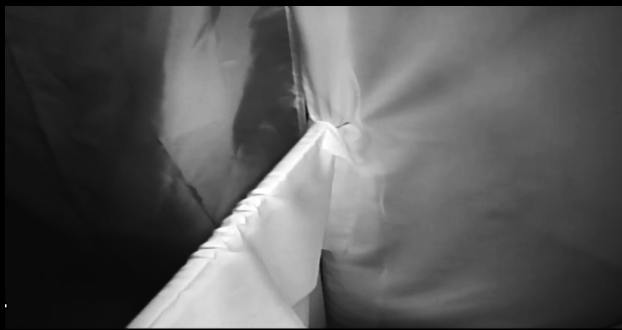
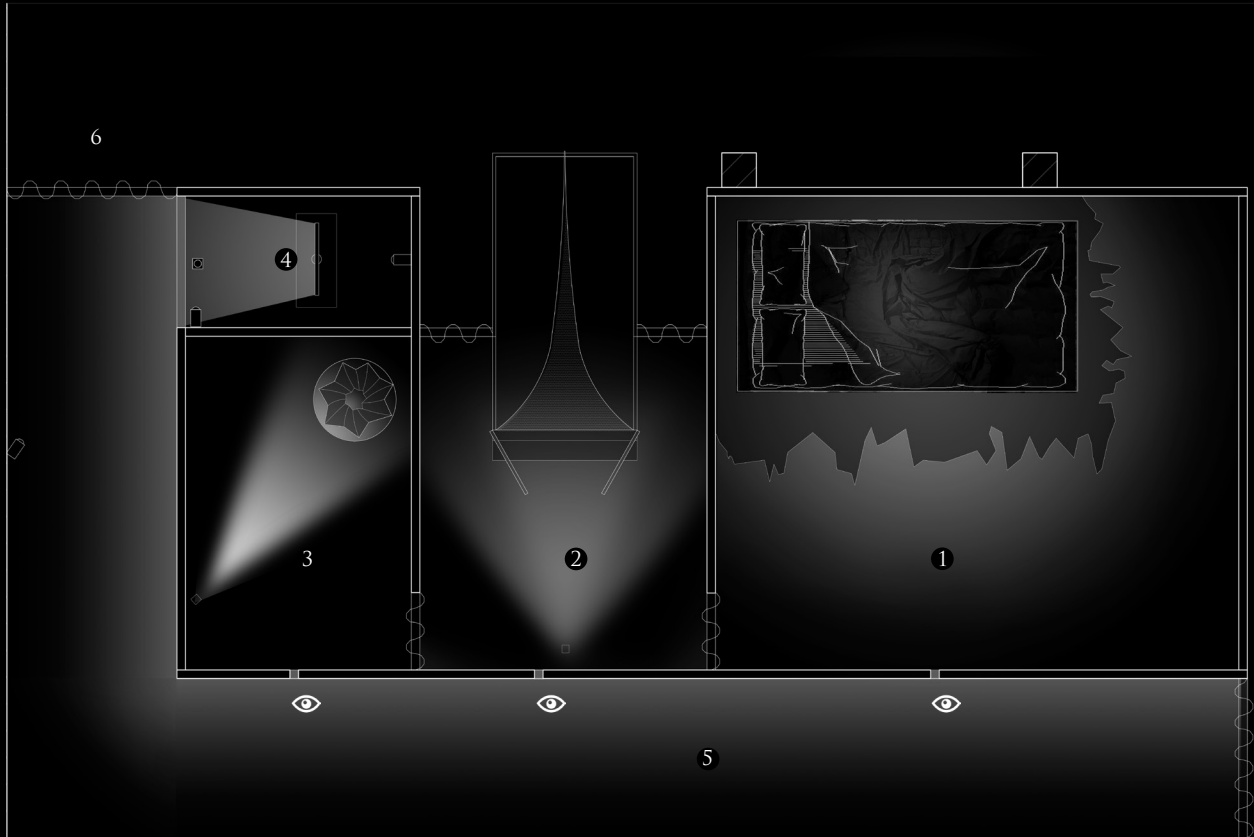CAM 4

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$\oplus$ Detailed Plan   1:50

👁 peephole
1. Scene One
2. Scene Two
3. Scene Three
4. Scene Four
5. corridor
6. exit

6.1   Introduction

In response to previous criticism regarding the academic aspect of the subject, the following chapter proposes making of the uncanny through architectural form. The validity of representing the phenomenon with physical material will be tested through an installation project which attempts to fabricate in real-life scale of the architectural uncanny. The design experiment allows visitors to discover their own interpretation of the uncanny as their unconscious is revealed in the process of exploring the space. The project pushes beyond representing architectural space as an object by means of static images and maquettes; instead, the intent of the installation is to construct an enclosing envelope in which one's body can be fully immersed and exposed to sensory stimulations provoked by the essence and materiality of the space. The following documentation will outline the design and construction process in two parts:

1. Planning: the objective, conceptual themes, use of the site, and exhibition planning
2. Process: the precedents, material studies, and process of the construction

The objective of the project is to create the architectural uncanny within the context of the everyday world in which one's sense of curiosity and insecurity are stimulated simultaneously. The built constructs and the material configurations should induce uncertainties of echoing the unknown while arousing the desire to uncover the strange nature of the space. It is important to construct powerful devices that can set certain moods and influence settings in order to allow visitors to fully experience the emotional tension of the fear of the unhomely. Moreover, the sequenced order of the scenes should create a story of a surprising subversion.

6.2   Theme: A Strange Inversion

The installation unveils the neglected, hence, forgotten spaces of everyday architecture. Because the void space, whether between the furniture, under the bed, or inside the closet, is usually inactivated and insignificant in everyday life, they are not situated within the perimeter of our vision's focus. Whatever stays "in the periphery of the visual field" becomes "increasingly vague and hazy"; hence, the void space "remain[s] unconscious and unnoticed".[1]

     In order to reveal these unremembered spaces through articulated architectural scenes, two precepts were applied to the design: first, the banality of everyday space, especially its materiality and essence, should be dramatically transformed into the unfamiliar; second, the scale of the void should be relevant to the size of the human body. The scenes were created to provoke an intense feeling of surprise and uneasiness upon discovering the peculiar nature of

Fig. 13 Photography by Francesca Woodman, *House #4,* 1976

the materials, including their texture, lighting, and ambience. The purpose is to project one's unconscious, including personal memories, ideas, and emotions, unto the physical space, thus, causing its defamiliarization within the context of the real world. Also, the dimensions of each void was controlled in a way that the space can enclose a single human body. The reason was to create the essence of intimacy, as well as to relate one's own body with that of an imagined stranger hiding in the void, whose motive seems to be disintegrating the subject's existential being from the world.

A feeling of anxiety is provoked as one is engaged in the scene, with anticipation for the unknown to reveal itself; however, it never does, since it is only a figment of the imagination. There is a hint of fetishism in the tug of war between the desire to identify the unknown and the apprehension of its strange nature. Learning about one's own unconscious is therefore a fearful exercise; in most cases, the desire is for it to be kept secret and private, even from the conscious part of one's mind. The installation seeks to break this rule and to agitate the controlled boundary between the real and the unreal.

The sequence photography by Duane Michals captures our psychological response to the void space inside the realm of domestic setting. The blurred image of a strange figure is a materialized form of our fear of the unknown. The mysterious presence — the unhomely — is hidden in the place of the homely; it is an uninvited stranger, at the same time, a part of our own body of living, of our everyday consciousness. His photographs represent the paradox that insecurity lives inside the most familiar, secure place in the world.

Fig. 14 Sequence Photograph series, *The Bogeyman*, by Duane Michals, 1973

6.3　Setting & Device

Site & Time

The exhibition was held at the Bridge Storefront located in downtown Cambridge. Part of a shabby-looking retail complex, the building exudes a hint of inhospitable ambience by the exterior. Moreover, the rest of the vast interior space was unoccupied, amplifying the pervasive feeling of emptiness. The installation was constructed at the Southwest corner of the unit where very little light reached. Adding to these advantageous characteristics of the site, the exhibition opened from the late afternoon to the evening to heighten the unhomely atmosphere of the space.

It was critical to control the level of lighting and sound in order to eliminate any visual or auditory factors that could interrupt one's experience of the installation. The sense of stillness was achieved through use of a minimal amount of light, just enough for visitors to recognize the entrance and the exit of the space. The darkness was indispensable to set up the mood for one's mystery and uncertainty. Other than the faint sound of traffic noise coming from the outside, the space remained silent.

Controlled Environment

There was one instruction given to the visitors prior to their entering the installation: one person was allowed at a time. The idea of being isolated was critical to the experience of the uncanny in order to generate an intense engagement of one's mind in the complex, mysterious nature of the setting. Without any disturbance from external factors, it was possible to experience the intense emotions as intended.

Materials

Overall, the installation emulates an ordinary household setting with each mise-en-scène depicting a particular story of someone's living arrangement. Since the challenge of the project is to make the familiar unfamiliar, every part of the installation is constructed with materials that can be easily identified in our everyday life. The household items, such as the bedframe, wardrobe, curtains, lights, are also of the common and typical kind.

Scale

The scale is reduced to the minimum in order to create a sense of entrapment; the room's dimensions and the ceiling's heights are just enough to accommodate furniture and extra circulation space. Such a scale emphasizes the intimacy and the privacy of the space.

Peephole

The peepholes play a critical part in controlling visitors' physical and psychological interaction with the space. It is a device that limits one's access to visual information as well as one's bodily movement around the space. There is only one single peephole given for each room, and only through this lens, the interior scene can be observed. The fixed locations of the peepholes force visitors to adjust their eye levels and hold still to look through the frames. One can only see from a distance but cannot touch. It requires one's focused attention for a certain period of time in order to be able to read the essence of the materials and the lightings, and if possible, to understand the unfamiliar quality of the construct. Partially revealing, yet, partially hiding, the peepholes restrict a full exposure of the materials. As a result, such a controlled environment provokes frustration and anxiety.

The act of peeping implies voyeurism in one's experience of the architectural space. It is a secret invasion into another's private sanctuary while placing oneself in the perspective of an outsider. The peepholes are, in this case, an architecturally induced framework which evokes nuances of pervesity and curiosity simultaneously.

Surveillance

The concept of looking furtively through the opening repeats for the first three scenes; however, the last scene presents a shocking twist to this entire narrative. Upon the moment of entering the scene, one finds a bright screen staring back with surveyed images of oneself. In the quadruple coordinates of the screen, one's body parts are being monitored from different angles: the feet on the ground, back of the head, right under the chin, and the staring face. Suddenly surrendered to the surrounding eyes, one's sense of security is intimidated.

The sequential order of the scenes help in building up the emotional tension of the unhomely. The journey is a process of *familiarization*, soon followed by *defamiliarization*. After encountering the first three scenes, one expects to experience something similar, instead suddenly being confronted with the self. It is an abrupt transition from being a watcher to being watched. What is captured in the screen is certainly recognizable, however, the self-reflection has become strange to one's own senses. For that brief moment of unfamiliarity, a fear of being replaced by the other is aroused. Like Dostoyevsky's idea of *double*, one's own reflection has failed to assimilate with the self but has become the hostile and intimidating Other. This indicates that the moment of the uncanny has begun. It is not only a confrontation with the physical self, but also with the fundamental nature of one's existential being.

Point of Relief

The corridor links individualized scenes without interrupting the essence of the uncanny throughout the journey. It attempts to relieve one's emotional tension and to allow a brief moment of respite before proceeding to the next scene. It is the only accessible circulatory space allowed for visitors.

6.4 Feedback

The exhibition received much interesting feedback. As with original intent, there were two kinds of emotional responses to the experience of the space: fear and curiosity. The fear was registered in an ambiguous, yet intense, fashion. It was a feeling of horror without something concrete to be feared. All the rooms simply mimicked the familiar scene of an everyday home but in a peculiar way that was strange and disturbing to one's senses. The visitors mentioned that looking through the peepholes was a "playful and naughty" experience; however, at the last scene which was a quick transition from being a watcher to someone being watched, they were astounded at their own appearances in the screen. The site alone already created a mood of dread, and the exterior of the installation — "a giant black magic box" as quoted by one of the visitors — completely concealed what was hidden inside. Some even asked if there were people inside, while some others refused to enter alone.

After going through the whole sequence, some visitors approached to ask about the actual materiality of each assemblage. They were curious to find out if there were any meanings behind, but it was suggested that individuals interpret in their own personal way. The visitors also commented on the aesthetic qualities of the assemblages in Scene One and Scene Two, at which they had to stare for a long time trying to figure out what it was that composed both abstruseness and beauty.

6.5 Possible Enhancements

In the original plan, the video room was to be set up in a different way. Instead of featuring a real-time video, the screen was to play a series of recorded images of the viewer looking into the previous peepholes. The recorded videos from each room were to be played at a delayed interval in order to induce a feeling of frustration of secretly being watched. For executing this plan, it was required to set up sensors and technical devices that detect the motion of the viewer entering into the scenes, so that the camera records for the duration of the viewer staying in the installation. The plan was somewhat similar to Dan Graham's installation project, *Time Delay Room*, in which the viewers see themselves in the screen but

in an eight-second delayed loop. The time lag creates a feeling of being "trapped in a state of observation"[2], since the viewer realizes that one cannot control one's movement that has been already done. The past is constantly sought for, however, it can never be reclaimed.

6.6 Conclusion

This experiment was successful in the way that it called forth predicted responses. Not only does it validate previously formulated theories, but it also proves that making the architectural uncanny is feasible. Throughout the design process, there were many challenges and difficulties with creating the *unknown* in the context of everyday space, since it was critical to divert from logical planning and to work with my own sensibility and intuition. The design process somewhat resembled that of manifestation of the uncanny, in the sense that I did not force, but naively trusted, the power of the unconscious to unfold itself and project inspiring images based on my past experiences. The art of making the architectural uncanny or any other architecturalw phenomena, thus, requires one's well-developed creativity which can merge the physical world with the infinite possibilities of the imagination.

NOTES

1   Juhani Pallasmaa, "In Praise of Vagueness: Diffuse Perception and Uncertain Thought", *Encounters 2,* ed. Peter MacKeith (Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2012), 224.

2   Gregor Stemmrich, "Dan Graham", *CTRL[SPACE]. Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother, ZKM*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin et. al. (The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, London, 2002), 68.

CONSTRUCTION

November 17-26, 2014
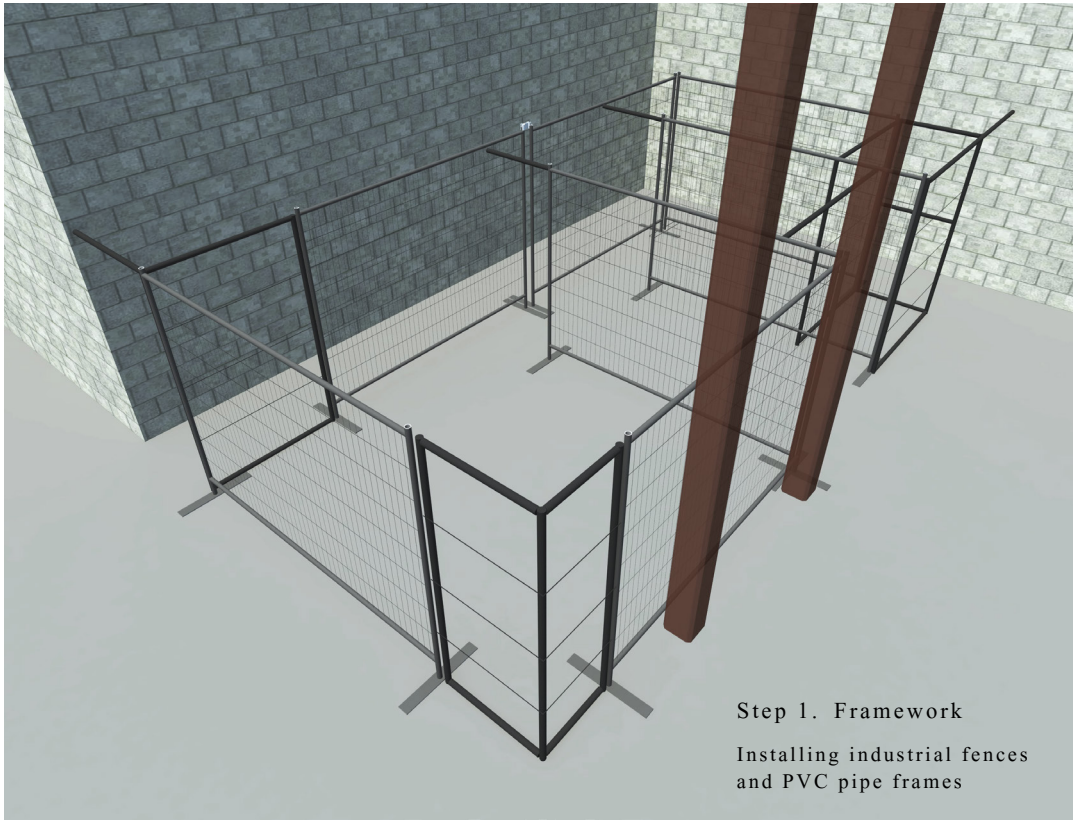
Step 1. Framework

Installing industrial fences
and PVC pipe frames
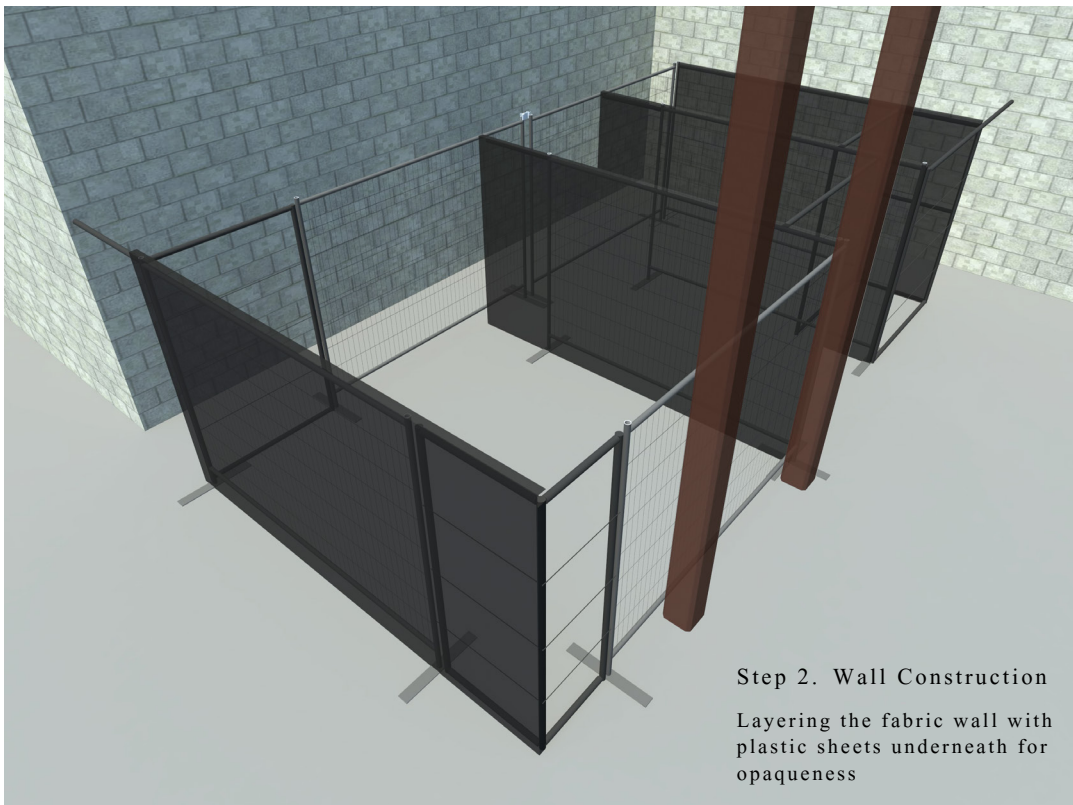
Step 2. Wall Construction

Layering the fabric wall with
plastic sheets underneath for
opaqueness

20g steel wire

1 1/2' pvc pipe

solid black
polyester fabric

black plastic sheet

temporary
metal fence

Detail A

PVC pipe corner fitting
drilled to the ground for
extra vertical support

Detail B

1x2 stud inserted into the
sewn sleeve to flatten the
surface of the fabric wall
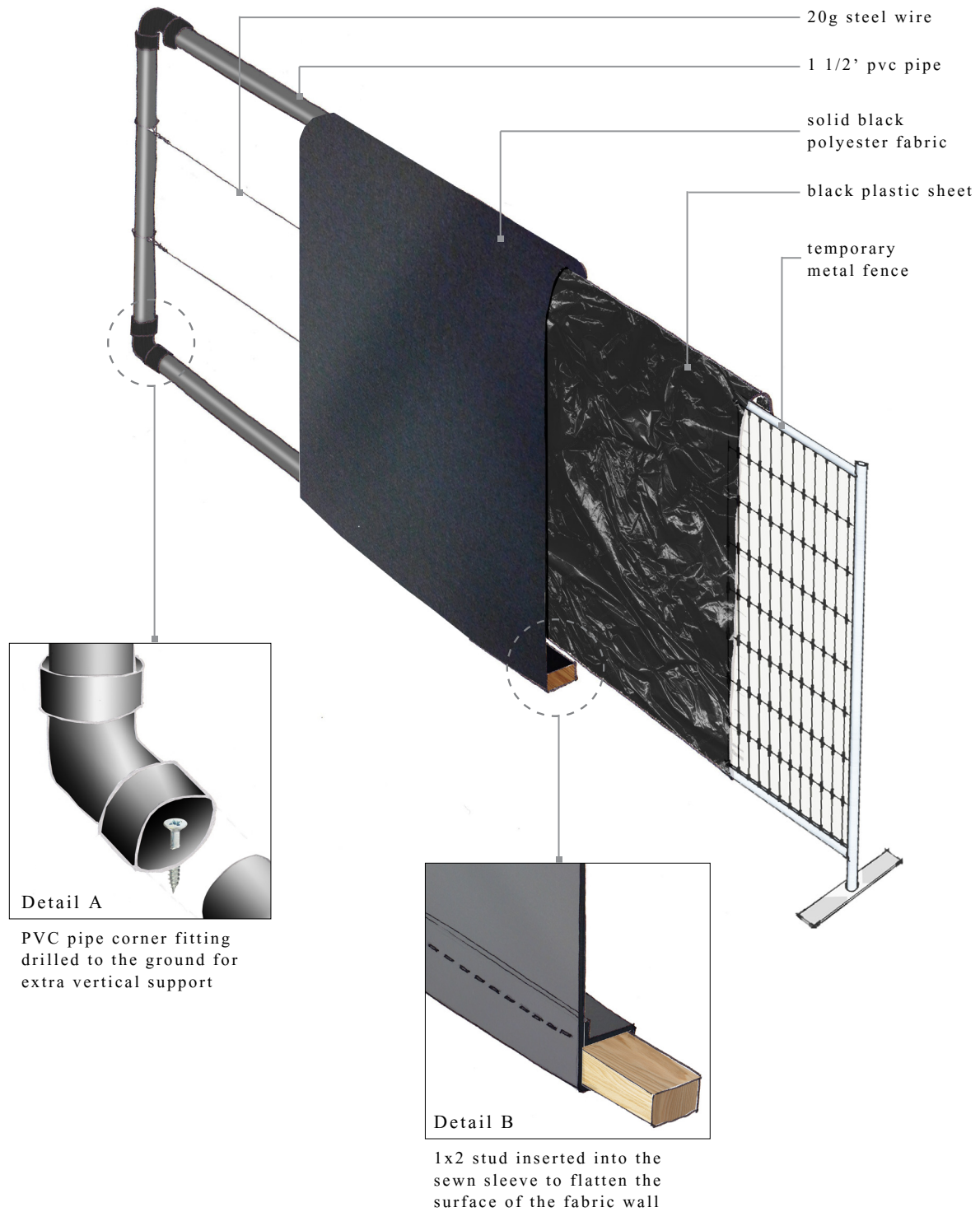
Fig. 15 Wall construction
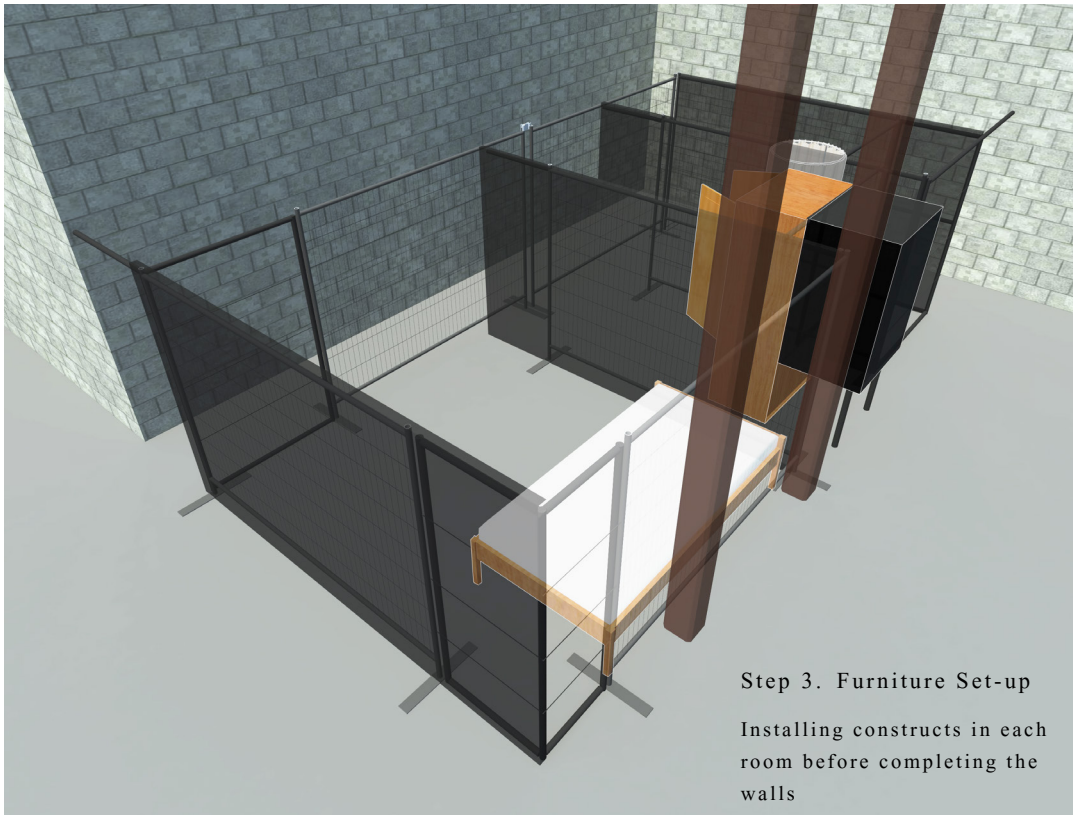
Step 3. Furniture Set-up

Installing constructs in each room before completing the walls
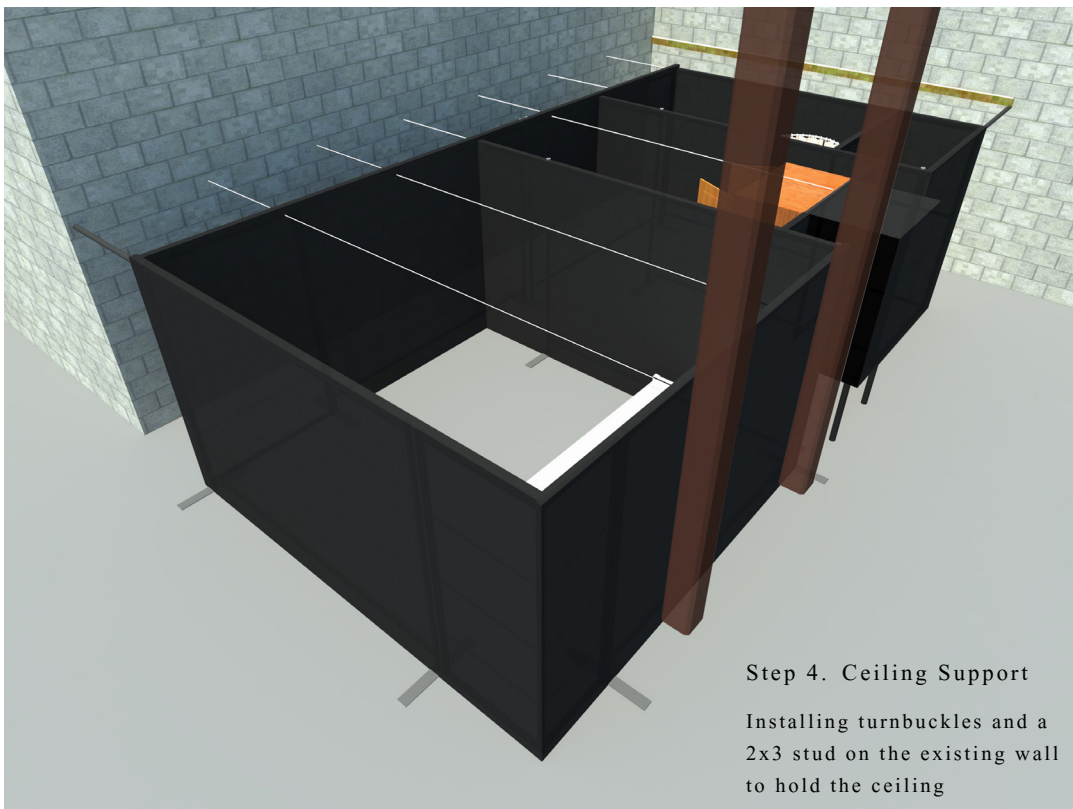
Step 4. Ceiling Support

Installing turnbuckles and a 2x3 stud on the existing wall to hold the ceiling
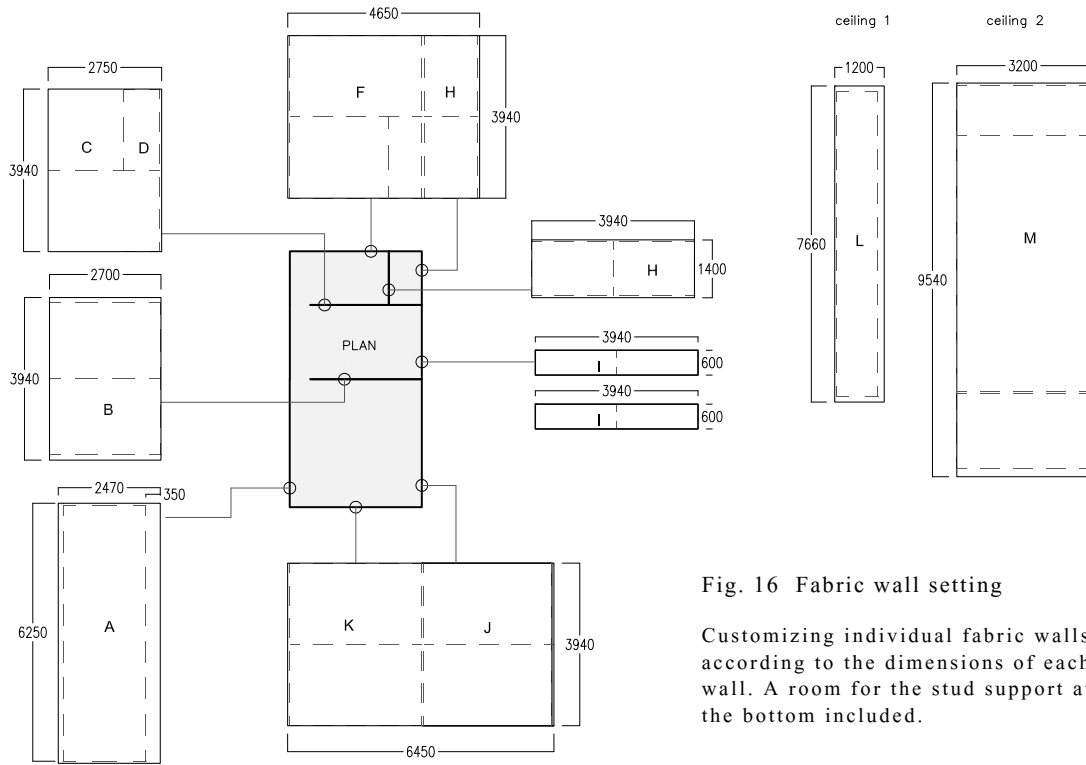
Fig. 16 Fabric wall setting

Customizing individual fabric walls according to the dimensions of each wall. A room for the stud support at the bottom included.
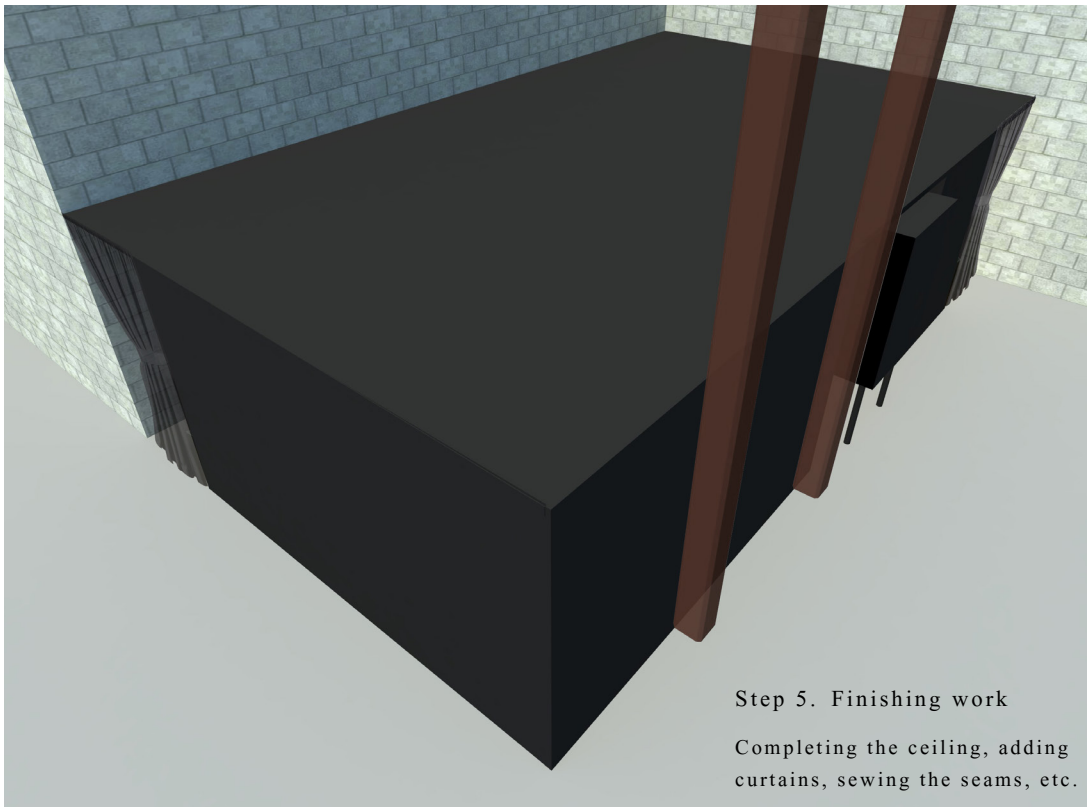
Step 5. Finishing work

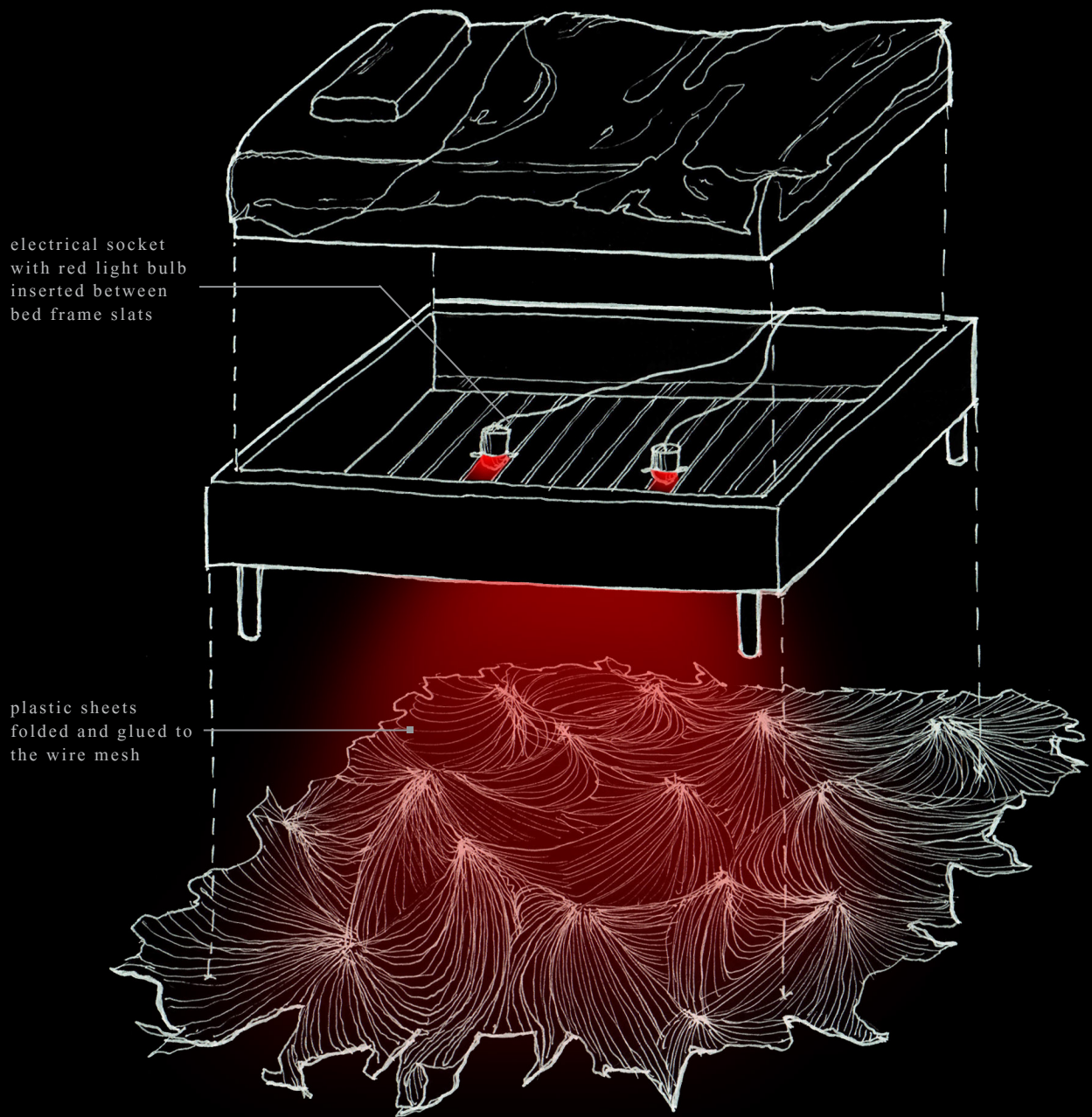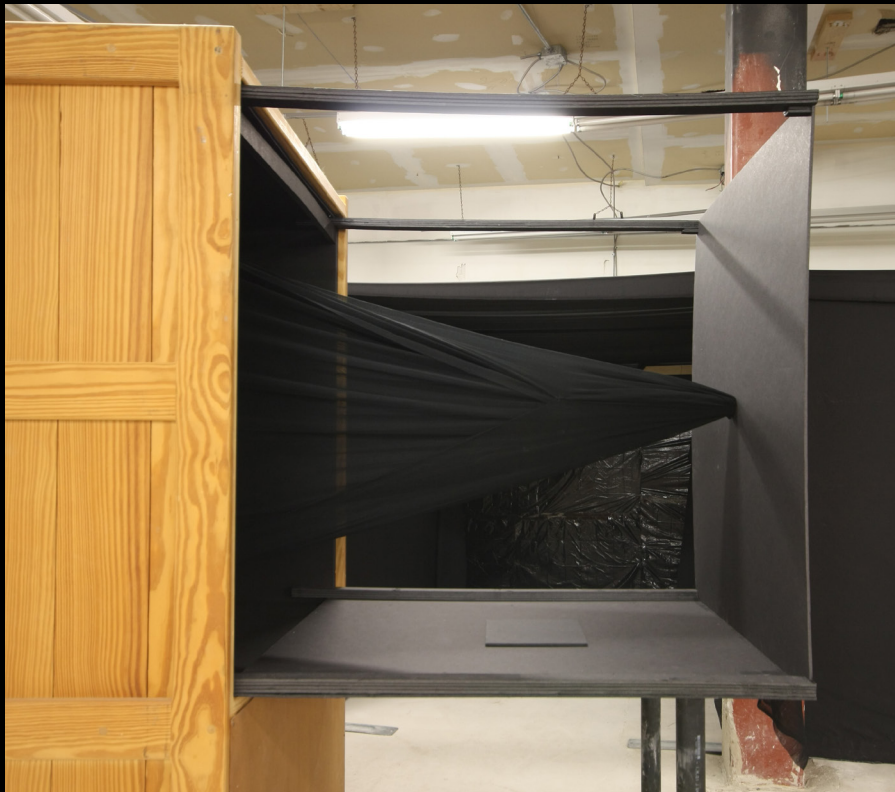Completing the ceiling, adding curtains, sewing the seams, etc.

electrical socket
with red light bulb
inserted between
bed frame slats

plastic sheets
folded and glued to
the wire mesh
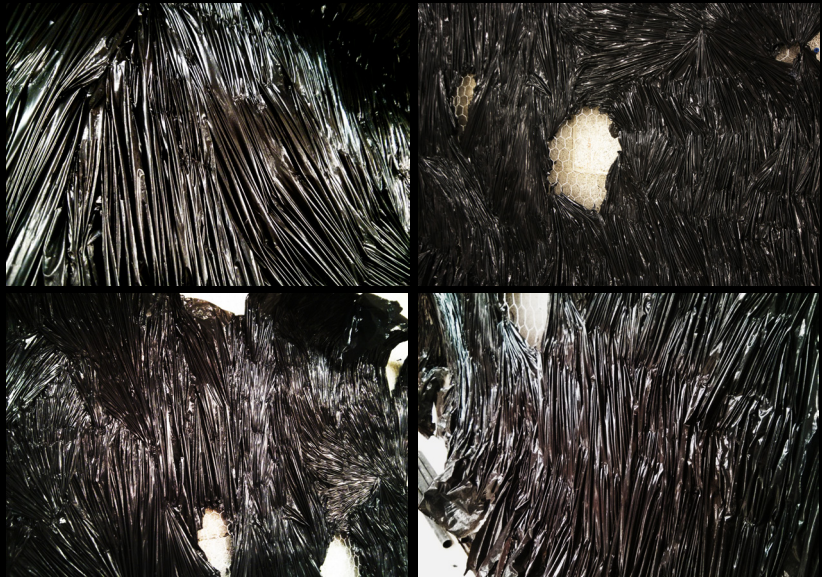
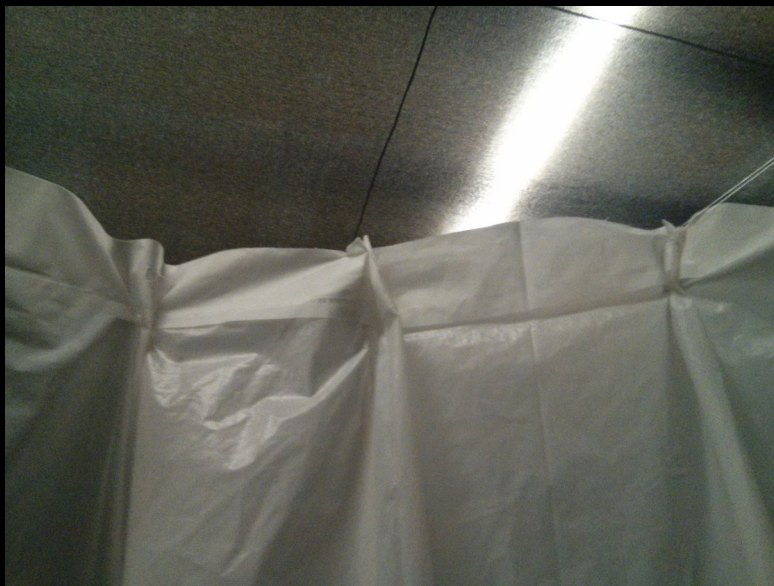Fig. 17 Material composition of the Scene #1 *A Stranger in My Dream*

foam core structure
holding the fabric

mesh fabric stretched
(edge to be flushed with
front face of the ward-
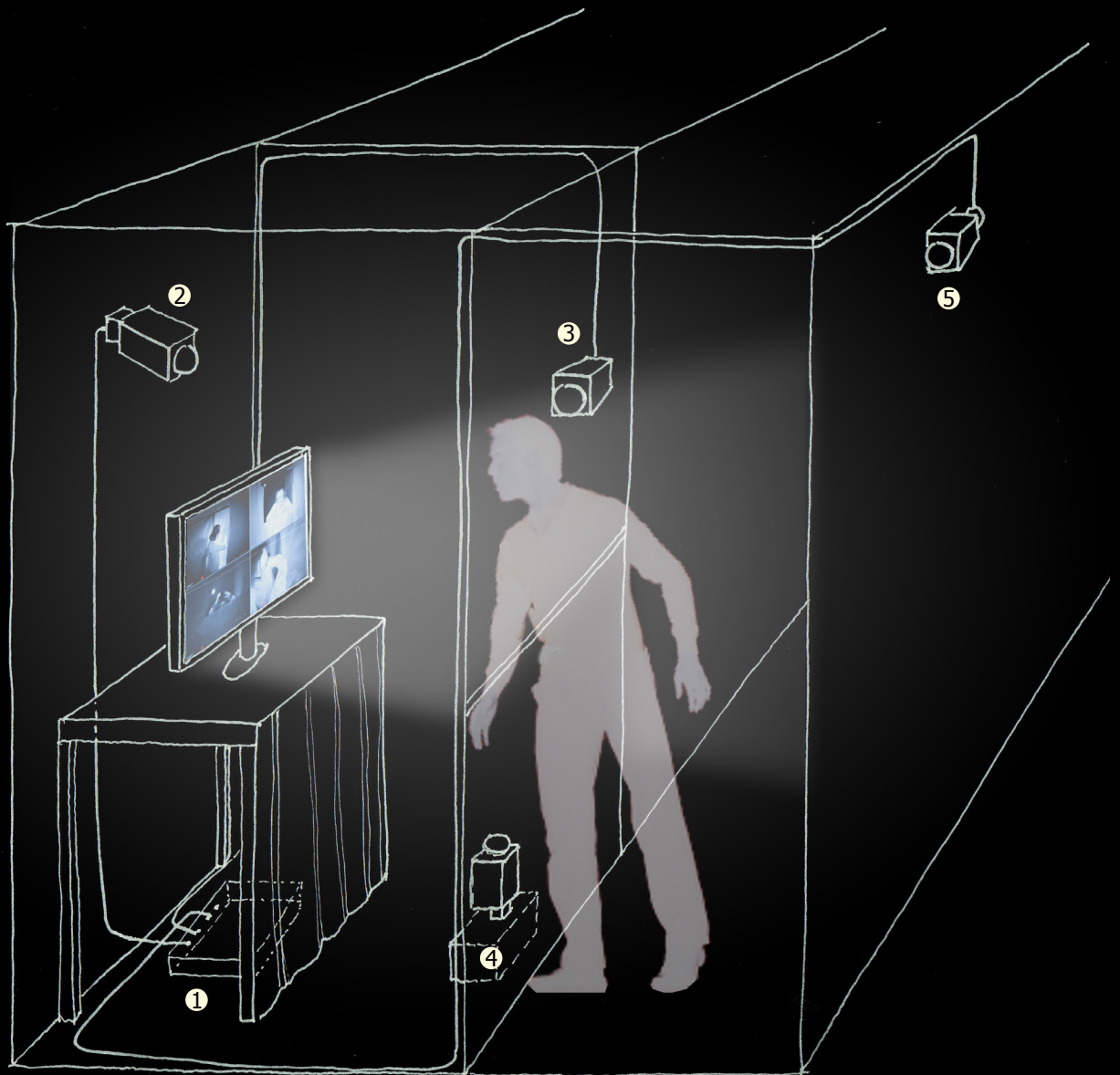robe)
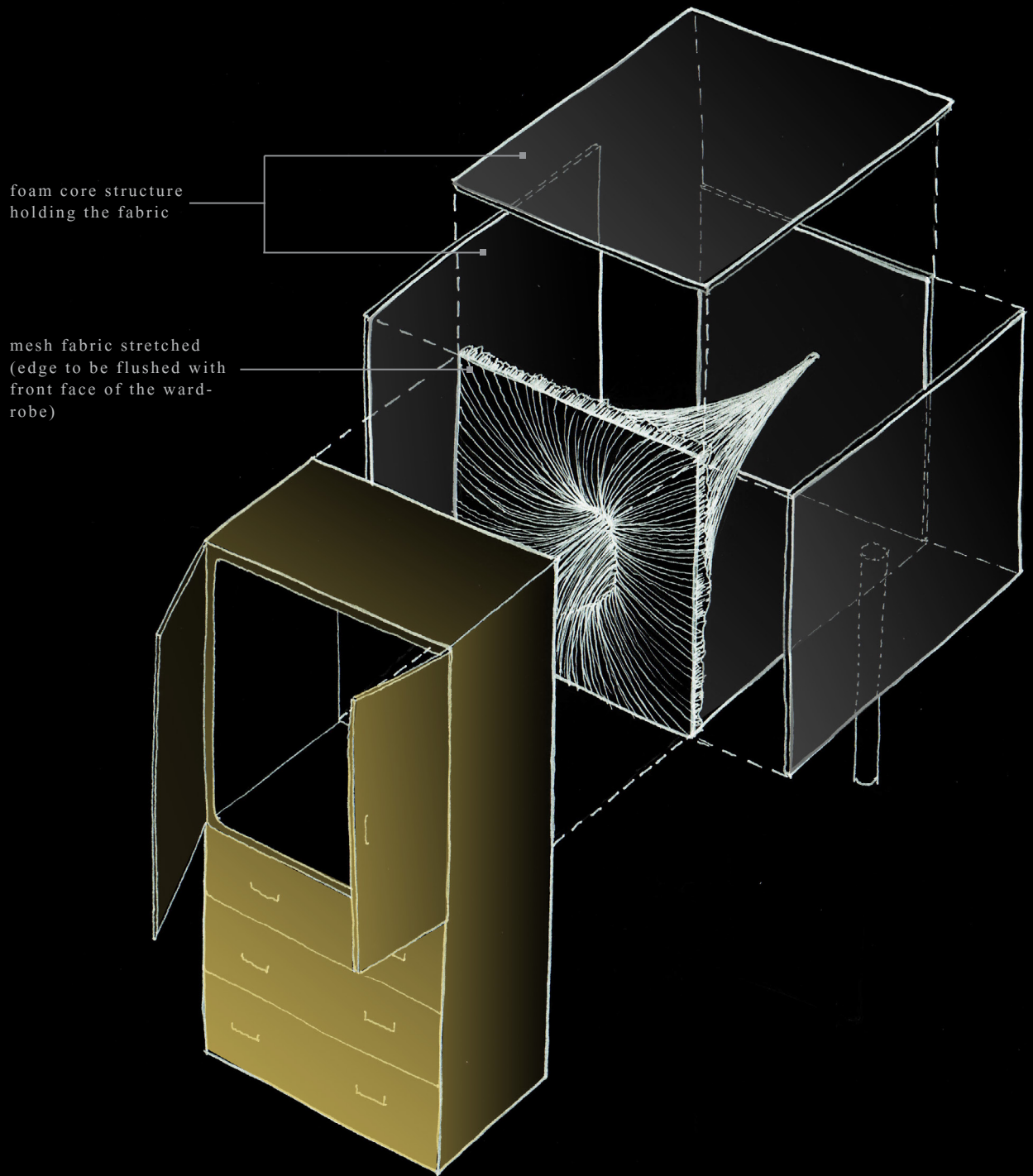
Fig. 18 Material composition of the Scene #2 *Into the Abyss*

a fishing wire
suspended from the
ceiling and sewn onto
the top of the curtain

tightening up
with a string

a lump of black
fabric hidden inside the
curtain

the bottom of the black
object reflected in the
mirror
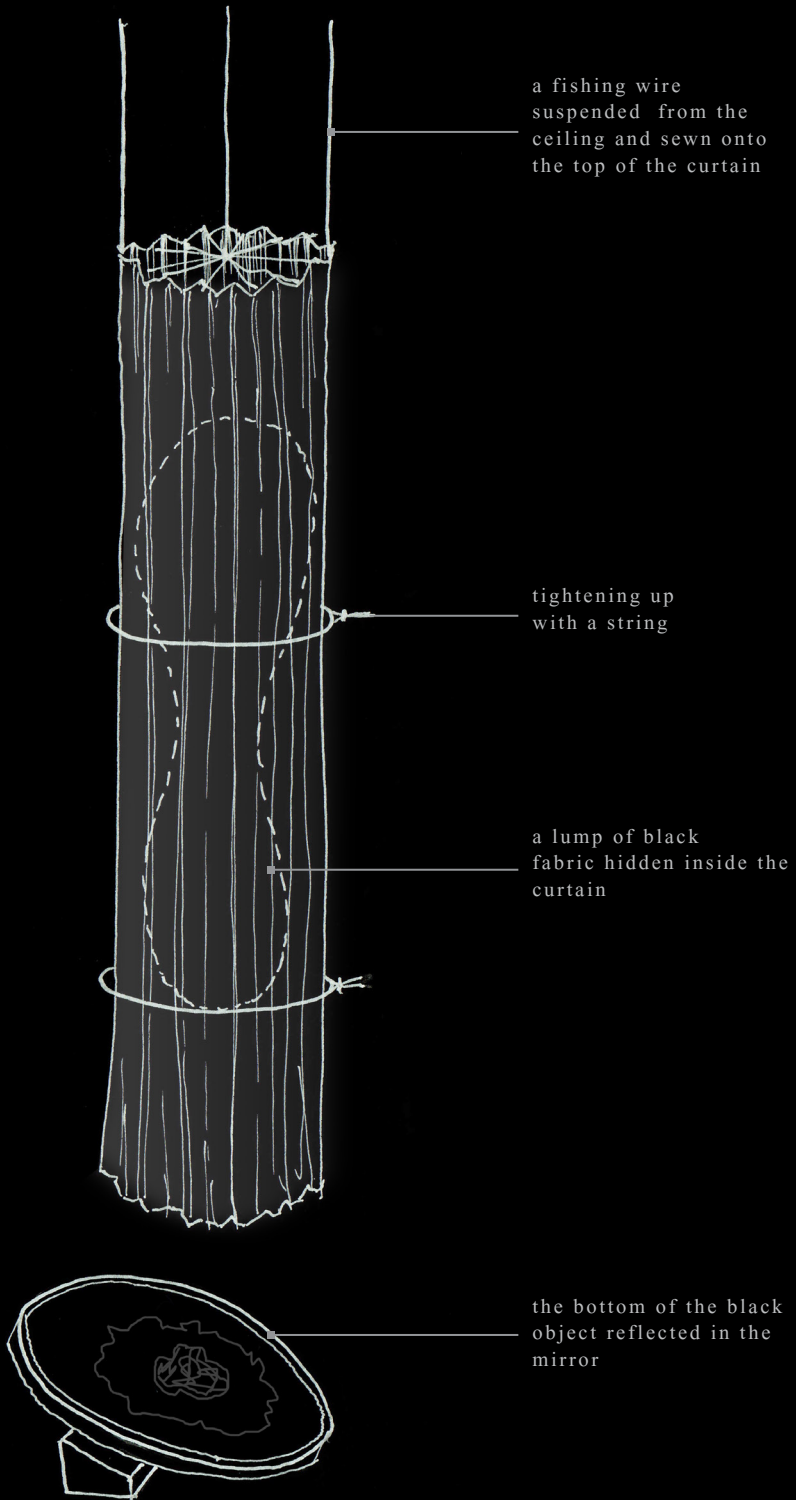
Fig. 19 Material composition of the Scene #3 *The Dark Reflection*

1. DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDER
2. CAMERA #1 -FRONT OF FACE
3. CAMERA #2 -UNDER NOISE
4. CAMERA #3 -SIDE OF FACE
5. CAMERA #4 -BEHIND BACK

Fig. 20 Camera settings of the Scene #4 *Moment of the Inversion*

Fig. 21 Sketch idea #1 *Watching vs. Being Watched*

"secret viewing/ peep through/ I vs. I/ revealing the self/ surveillance"
"peephole/ camera/ mirror/ reflective surface"

Fig. 22 Sketch idea #2 *Into the Other World*

"anticipating the unknown/ the innermost/ the forbidden"
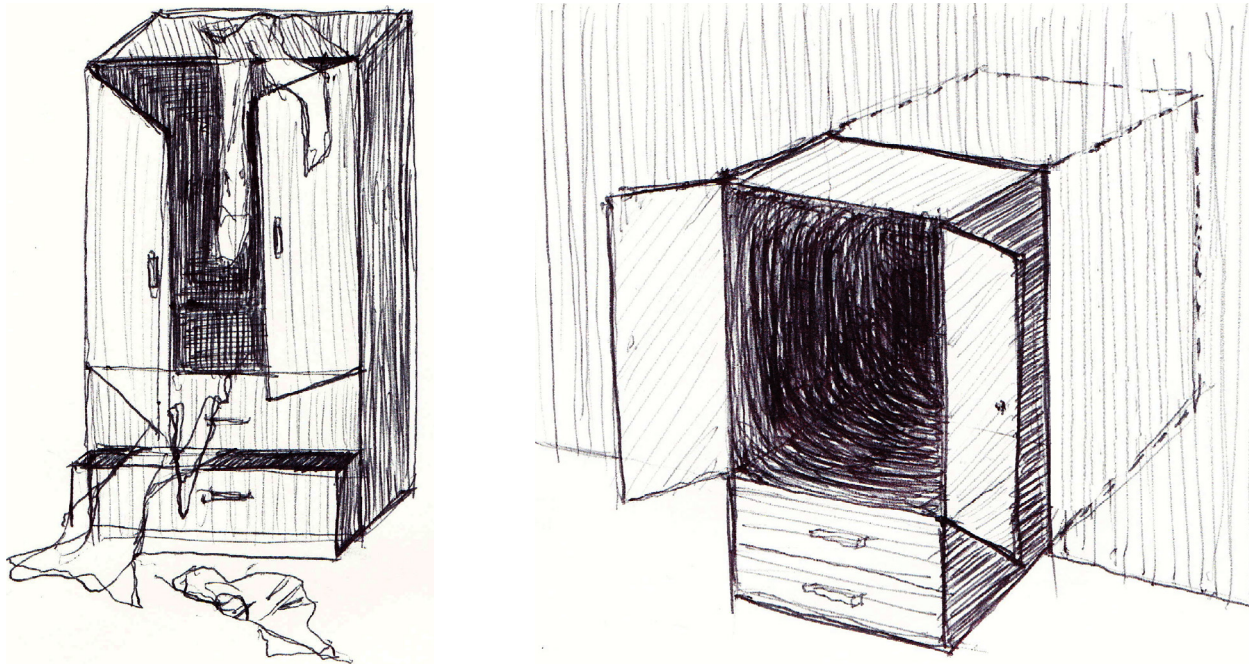"into the abyss/ the endless, depthless/ the uncertain"

Fig. 23 Sketch idea #3 *Underneath the...*

"horror in sleep/ dreaming when awake"
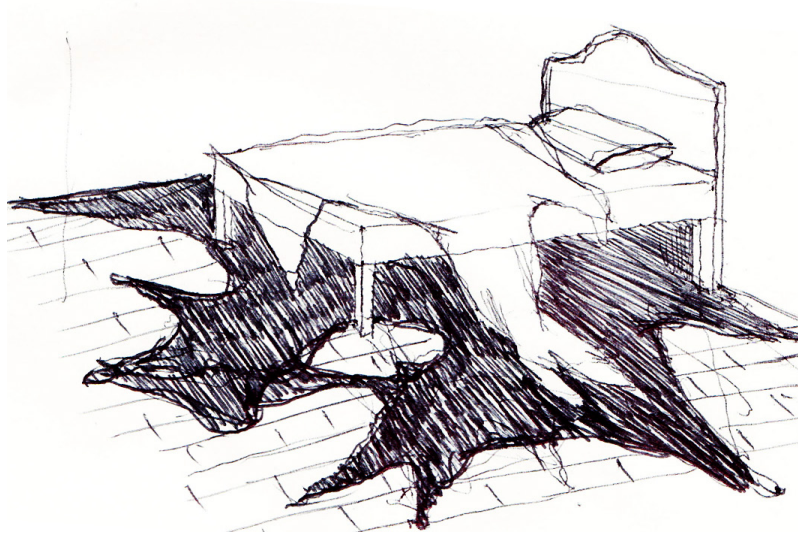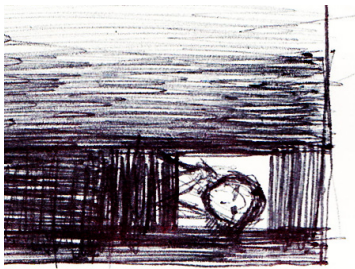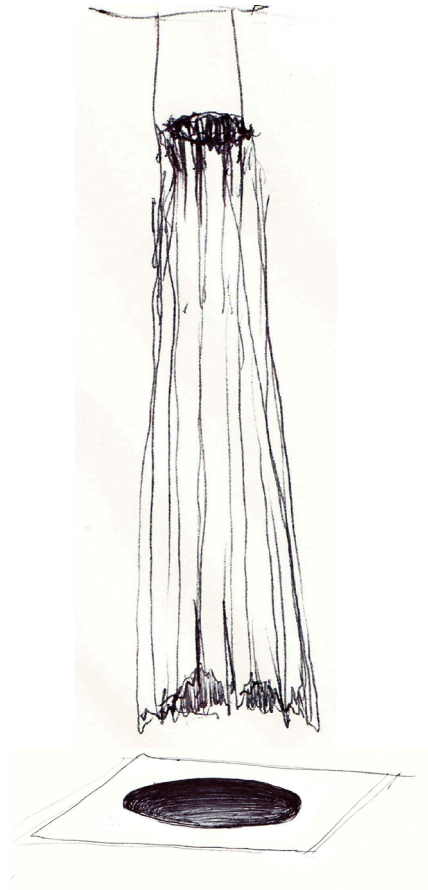"leftover space/ the insignificant, forgotten/ creeping into..."
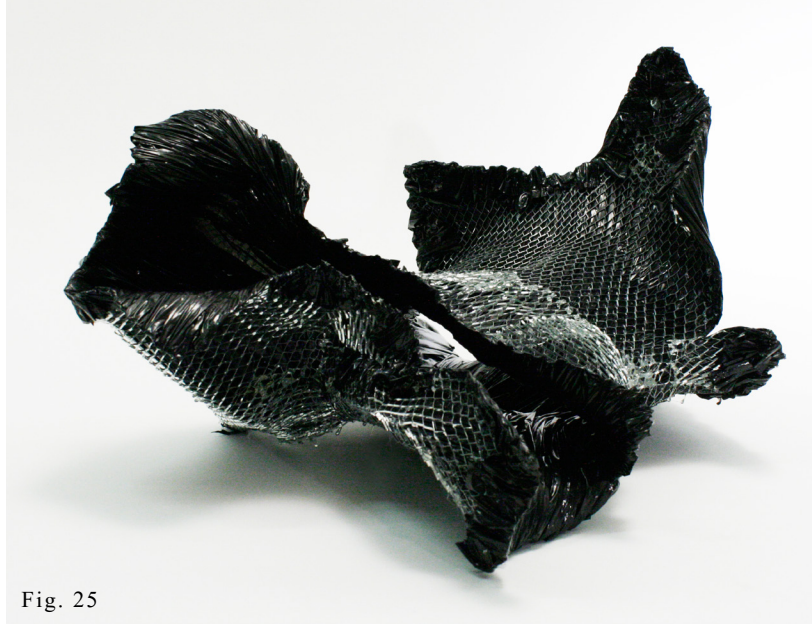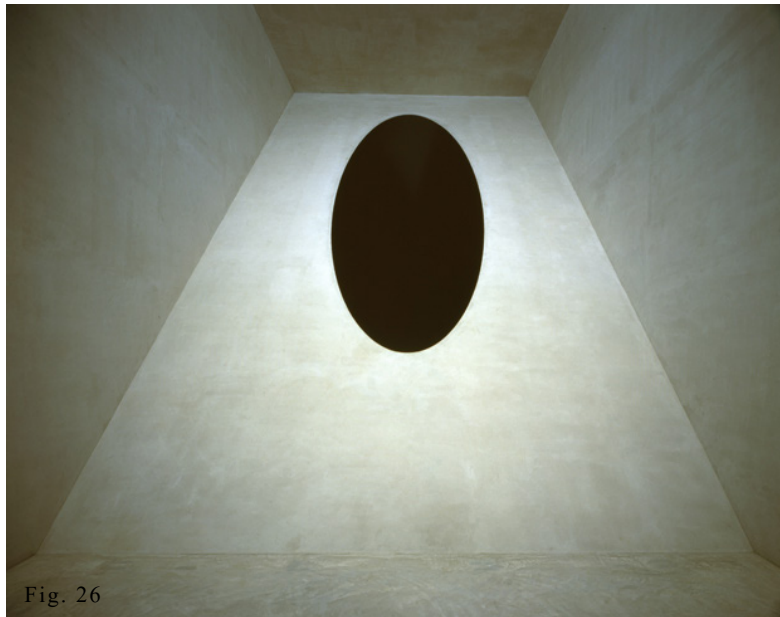

Fig. 24 Sketch idea #4 *The Hung*

"as if.../ the hidden, concealed"
"trapped/ inescapable"

PRECEDENT #1.   The Author
Untitled (2012)
Vinyl sheet on metal mesh
25 x 40 x 35 cm

Fig. 25

PRECEDENT #2.   Anish Kapoor
The Origin of the World (2004)
Concrete, reinforcing, pigment
7.5 x 12 x 6 m

Fig. 26

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller

a. *The Killing Machine* (2007)

Mixed media with sound, pneumatics, robotics
5 min. loop

b. *Opera for a Small Room* (2005)

Mixed media with sound, record players, records and synchronized lighting
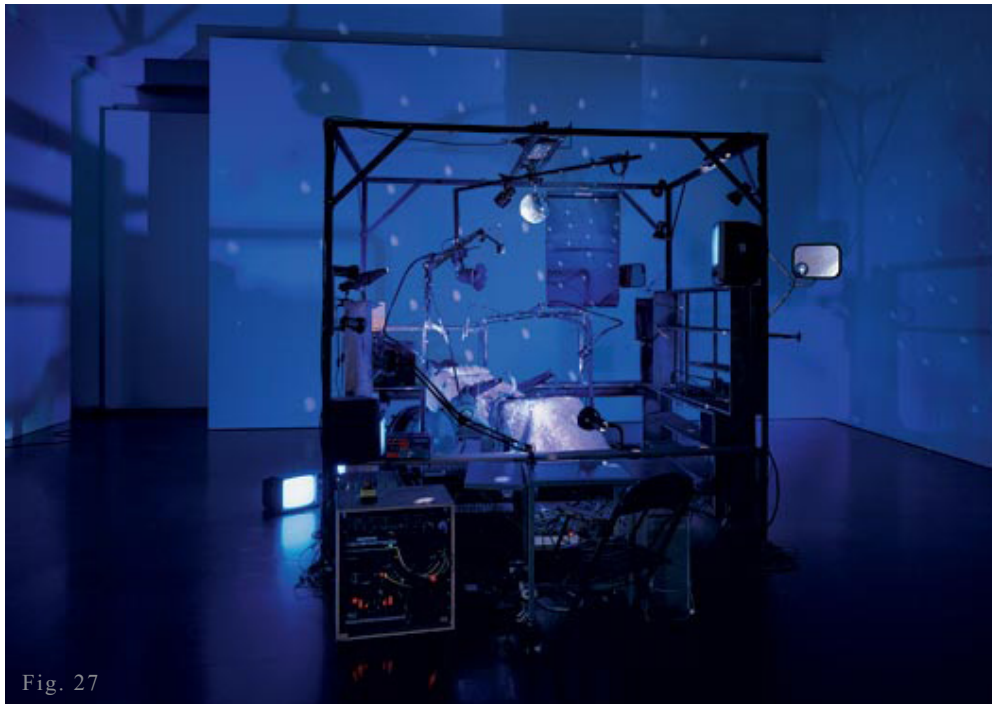20 min. loop
2.6 x 3.0 x 4.5 m

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

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Melancholia. 2011. Produced by Meta Louise Foldager and Louise Vesth. Written and Directed by Lars von Trier. Zentropa, Denmark.

Metropolis. 1927. Produced by Erich Pommer. Written by Thea von Harbou. Directed by Fritz Lang. Universum Film, Germany.

Mr. Nobody. 2009. Produced by Philippe Godeau. Written and Directed by Jaco Van Dormael. Pan-Européenne, Belgium.

Nostalghia. 1983. Directed by Andrey Tarkovsky. Written by Tonino Guerra and Andrei Tarkovsky. Opera Film Produzione, Soviet Union.

Rear Window. 1954. Produced and Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and James Stewart. Patron Inc, United States.

Spirited Away [Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi]. 2001. Produced by Toshio Suzuki. Written and Directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Tokuma Shoten and Studio Ghibli, Japan.

Pan's Labyrinth. 2006. Narrated by Pablo Adán. Produced by Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón, Bertha Navarro, Frida Torresblanco and Alvaro Augustin. Written and Directed by Guillermo del Toro. Estudios Picasso, Spain.

Rebecca. 1940. Produced by David O. Selznick. Written by Philip MacDonald and Michael Hogan. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Selznick International Pictures, United States.

The Birds. 1963. Produced and Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Written by Evan Hunter. Alfred Hitchcock Productions, United States.
The Others. 2011. Produced by Fernando Bovaira, José Luis Cuerda and Sunmin Park. Directed and Scored by Alejandro Amenábar. Cruise/Wagner Productions, Spain and United States.

The Shining. 1980. Written, Directed and Produced by Stanley Kubrick. The Producer Circle Company, United States.

The Truman Show. 1998. Produced by Edward S. Feldman, Scott Rudin, Andrew Niccol and Adam Schroeder. Written by Andrew Niccol. Directed by Peter Weir. Scott Rudin Productions, United States.

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